

DENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION PROMOTING GOOD ORAL HEALTH IN IRELAND

The Dental Health Foundation supports health professionals by providing evidence based best practice resources to increase awareness amongst the public, empowering them to make healthier oral and general health lifestyle choices.

Oral health is not only important to your appearance and sense of well-being, but is also an important component of general health at all stages of life. The available evidence shows that oral diseases share important common risk factors with the four leading chronic diseases - cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes - including unhealthy diet, tobacco use, and excessive alcohol consumption.

Oral disease remains a serious public health issue. Dental caries and treatment is traumatic for a child, it may result in pain, lead to infection and result in hospitalisation and extraction of teeth under general anaesthetic.

Baby teeth are important for eating, talking and smiling. Getting children actively involved in their oral health from an early age improves both their oral and general health as adults. Poor oral health has been linked to sleeping, behavioural and developmental problems in children.

Advice to pregnant women about their oral health during pregnancy is important for both them and their baby. Studies suggest a link between poor oral health and women delivering pre-term, low birth weight babies. Making healthy choices can positively affect their baby's development including their teeth. Hormonal changes during pregnancy can make women's gums more vulnerable to plaque/bacteria and more likely to bleed.

Good oral health is also essential for healthy ageing, a healthy mouth will improve general well-being and quality of life. Tooth loss and ill-fitting dentures in older people affects their ability to eat, speak or socialise properly. It also puts them at a higher risk for malnutrition, cardiovascular disease and infectious respiratory diseases such as pneumonia. Older people in long-term care facilities are at particular risk of complications from poor oral health because of frailty, poor health and increased dependence on others for personal care.

Community nurses have an important role to play in the oral health care of their patients by promoting daily oral hygiene, a healthy diet, avoidance of smoking, and low consumption of alcohol. In 2013, a 'lift the lip' early childhood oral screening and referral program by public health nurses was implemented in Co. Cork.

Oral health related awareness can benefit the whole family, for example grandparents who care for their grandchildren during the day can help establish good oral hygiene and dietary habits during childhood.

The Dental Health Foundation supports health professionals by providing evidence based best practice resources to increase awareness amongst the public, empowering them to make healthier oral and general health lifestyle choices. Having the right information on tooth tips, diet and general health will help keep teeth healthy for a



lifetime. Good oral health is of vital importance to the general health of everyone in Ireland.

Health Promotion is about empowering people to take control of their own lives so make every contact count.

See more at www.dentalhealth.ie/publications/resources.html

Further Training

Public Health Nurses and/or Community Nurses who would like professional education and training in the principles and practice of Oral Health Promotion can also apply for a one year Specialist Certificate in Health Promotion (Oral Health)

For further details see www.dentalhealth.ie/professionals/specialistcerti.html