

Oral Health – A Public Health Issue

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“Public Health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organized efforts of society.”

John Last, *A Dictionary of Epidemiology*

Oral health

Oral health contributes to your overall health, growth and development, and mental and social well-being. It affects how well you can eat, speak, maintain proper nutrition, and socialize.

Oral disease

- Oral diseases, including infectious ones, are among the most prevalent chronic diseases.
- These diseases are tooth decay, oral cancer, and periodontal diseases—serious gum infections that can lead to tooth loss.
- Oral diseases—once considered just localized infections—are now associated with other diseases.¹ There is overwhelming evidence linking sugar consumption to tooth decay. A diet high in fat, sugar and salt also low in fiber is a risk factor for dental cavities, heart disease and obesity.
- Oral pain can have a significant negative impact on your quality of life. On the positive side, a healthy, attractive smile boosts self-esteem and how one is perceived by others.

Did you know?

- You can't be healthy without oral health.
- Tooth decay has not been eradicated—decay in children's primary teeth predicts future decay in adult teeth.
- In some areas in Canada, dental procedures under general anesthesia are the most common surgical procedures that children receive in hospitals.²

- Canadians spend 10 billion dollars a year on oral health care, diseases, and injuries that are almost all preventable. That is 7% of the total public and private health spending in Canada.
- If you smoke, drink alcohol excessively, or have diabetes, then your chances of developing periodontal disease are higher. Smoking and alcohol consumption also increase your risk for oral cancer.
- Oral disease is related to income. People with lower incomes suffer higher rates of disease.
- Government spending on oral health has decreased from 9.0% to 4.6% of total oral health spending in just 15 years.³

What can each of us do?

- Oral disease and oral injuries are preventable. Take control of your oral health with a healthy diet, daily personal oral hygiene and regular oral exams. When playing sports wear a sports mouth guard.
- Advocate for public investments in oral health promotion and disease prevention programs such as school screenings, dental sealants, water fluoridation, injury prevention, and support increased public funding for disadvantaged populations.

1. Lux, J. Review of the Oral Disease—Systemic Disease Link. Part I and II. *Canadian Journal Of Dental Hygiene*, Nov-Dec 2006, Vol. 40(6): 288-342 and Jan-Feb, 2007 Vol. 41(1): 8-21.
2. British Columbia. Provincial health officer's annual report 1997. Victoria: Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors; 1998. p. 92.
3. Canadian Institute for Health Information. Exploring the 70/30 split: how Canada's health care system is financed. Ottawa: CIHI; 2005.

S U P P O R T P U B L I C H E A L T H !

This message brought to you by the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21)
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Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century – Membership (Sept. 6, 2005)

Coalition canadienne pour la santé publique au 21^e siècle – organisations membres (6 sept. 2005)

Association of Canadian Academic HealthCare Organizations	L'Alliance canadienne de la maladie mentale et de la santé mentale
Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada	L'Alliance pour la prévention des maladies chroniques du Canada
Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health	L'Ambulance SaintJean
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists	L'Association canadienne de physiothérapie
Canadian Association for School Health	L'Association canadienne de santé dentaire publique
Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry	L'Association canadienne de santé publique
Canadian Cancer Society	L'Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes
Canadian Chiropractic Association	L'Association canadienne des hygiénistes dentaires
Canadian Dental Association	L'Association canadienne des institutions de santé universitaires
Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion	L'Association canadienne des soins de santé
Canadian College of Health Service Executives	L'Association canadienne des médecins vétérinaires
Canadian Dental Hygienists Association	L'Association canadienne du diabète
Canadian Diabetes Association	L'Association canadienne pour la santé en milieu scolaire
Canadian Healthcare Association	L'Association chiropratique canadienne
Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Population and Public Health	L'Association dentaire canadienne
Canadian Medical Association	L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers du Canada
Canadian Nurses Association	L'Association des pharmaciens du Canada
Canadian Paediatric Society	L'Association médicale canadienne
Canadian Pharmacists Association	L'Association pour la microbiologie médicale et l'infectologie Canada
Canadian Physiotherapy Association	L'Association pour la prévention des infections à l'hôpital et dans la communauté
Canadian Psychological Association	L'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
Canadian Public Health Association	L'Association pulmonaire
Canadian Society for International Health	La Coalition canadienne pour la sensibilisation et la promotion de la vaccination
Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science	Le Collège canadien des directeurs de services de santé
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association	Les diététistes du Canada
Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada	La Fondation des maladies du coeur du Canada
Community & Hospital Infection Control Association Canada	Les Institut de recherche sur la santé des populations – Université d'Ottawa
Dietitians of Canada	Les Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada, l'Institut de la santé publique et des populations
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada	Les Médecins pour un Canada sans fumée
Institute of Population Health University of Ottawa	SécuriJeunes Canada
National Specialty Society for Community Medicine	La Société canadienne de pédiatrie
St. John Ambulance	La Société canadienne de psychologie
Ontario Public Health Association	La Société canadienne de santé internationale
Physicians for a SmokeFree Canada	La Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical
Safe Kids Canada	La Société canadienne du cancer
The Lung Association	La Société nationale de spécialistes pour la médecine communautaire
University of Toronto, Department of Public Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine	L'Université de Toronto, Département des sciences de la santé publique, Faculté de médecine
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