

There is a proven link between oral health and overall health.



When neglected, oral infections can spread to the rest of the body.

When coinciding with systemic diseases, gum disease worsens illness.

As individuals receive regular dental care, their medical health improves—releasing vast savings back to the American health care system, government and businesses.

\$29 BILLION **DIABETES**
Diabetes not only worsens in the presence of gum disease but also serves as a risk factor for gum disease.

If 60% of people with diabetes better managed their oral health, savings could equal close to \$29 billion per year.

\$826 MILLION **EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS**
Many people wait until their dental pain becomes severe and end up in the ER, which is much costlier than care in a dental office.

If 50% of dental-related emergency room visits were handled in a community setting, the system could save around \$826 million.

\$7 BILLION **PREGNANCY**
Poor oral health can complicate pregnancy, contributing to gestational diabetes, preeclampsia and preterm birth.

If 40% of pregnant women received the benefits of oral care, thus avoiding the additional medical costs of gum disease, savings could equal approximately \$7 billion.

\$495 MILLION **ORAL CANCER**
Routine dental visits help detect oral cancer early on, which can lead to less complicated treatments, lower costs and higher survival rates.

If 20% more oral cancer cases were detected early, estimated annual savings would range from \$338 million to \$495 million.

\$5 BILLION **LUNG DISEASE**
The mouth retains respiratory pathogens, so oral health affects lung health, especially for people with Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP).

If 50% of VAP patients received oral care, estimated annual savings could reach \$5 billion.

\$101 MILLION **DENTAL SEALANTS**
These coatings placed on the surface of teeth are a simple, effective way to prevent decay (and reduce spending on more involved care) among low-income children.

If 50% of these children benefited from dental sealants, savings could equal around \$101 million.

Here's how we can promote the cost-effective power of oral care:

HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS, including insurance companies, can better integrate oral care into primary care as a core service.

POLICYMAKERS can consider mandatory dental coverage to encourage regular care. They can redesign government programs to extend broader care to adults and children.

BUSINESSES can ensure their employees are covered for oral health and establish wellness programs to encourage use of this coverage.

PEDIATRICIANS, primary care physicians, and dental hygienists can learn to deliver more extensive care, also exploring models such as virtual exams and community-based oral health centers.

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CONNECTING ORAL HEALTH TO OVERALL HEALTH

An Unexpected Strategy for Reducing Health Care Costs



DIABETES

CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS

ADVERSE PREGNANCY OUTCOMES

Connecting Oral Health to Overall Health

An Unexpected Strategy for Reducing Health Care Costs

Diabetes

People with diabetes, who have a weaker resistance to infection, are more susceptible to gum disease. In turn, gum infection may contribute to insulin resistance, making it harder for people with diabetes to keep their blood sugar stable.

Pneumonia

Bacteria in the mouth can be aspirated into the lungs, causing respiratory disease such as pneumonia.

Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes

Poor oral health may be linked to miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight.

Emergency Room Visits

Toothaches remain a common reason to pursue emergency treatment.

Coronary Artery Disease

Bacteria in the mouth leads to oral inflammation, which appears to play a role in blood clots and clogged passageways.

Cerebral Vascular Disease/Stroke

Inflammation and infection caused by oral bacteria might be linked to heart disease, clogged arteries, stroke and endocarditis (when bacteria from the mouth or another part of the body takes up residence in the heart).

Chronic Kidney Disease

Severe gum disease increases the risk of death in chronic kidney disease patients.

Menopause

Oral health is an important part of health counseling for peri- and postmenopausal women, given that the incidence of periodontitis increases after menopause. Hormone replacement therapy appears to be a protective measure.

