

Oral Health Fact Sheet

Concerns

- Oral diseases affect health and well-being throughout the life span.
- Oral health offers clues and reflects general health and well-being. Problems in your mouth can affect the rest of your body.
- Recent scientific progress strongly supports the link between oral health and systemic Health. (Oral diseases and conditions are associated with other health problems)
- There continues to be profound disparities and inequities in the health care system in the United States.

Facts

- The most common dental diseases dental (caries and periodontal diseases) are largely preventable
- Lifestyle behaviors that affect general health such as tobacco use, excessive alcohol use, and poor dietary choices are high risk indicators for oral health diseases.
- Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians and Alaska Natives generally have the economic factors that often relate to poor oral health include access to health services and an individual's ability to get and keep dental insurance are the poorest oral health of any racial and ethnic groups in the United States.
- Tooth decay is more prevalent in children who are Mexican American and black, non-Hispanic children.
- Untreated Tooth Decay in adults is two times more prevalent in Blacks, non-Hispanics, and Mexican as white, non-Hispanics.
- Individuals who lacked dental insurance were about two-thirds less likely than people with private insurance to have had a dental visit within the last year (**16.1** percent compared with **50.9** percent) ⁴
- As of September 2015, **22 states** did not provide any dental benefits to adults in their Medicaid programs beyond emergency procedures.⁵
- At year-end 2014, some 114 million American adults and children (67.7 million under 65 years of age) did not have dental insurance.⁶
- In 2014, more than half of all children on Medicaid (18 million) didn't get dental care.⁷
- In 2012, more than 2 million dental related ER visits had cost estimates up to \$1.6 Billion. ⁸
- There are currently **5,373** Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas based on dentist to population ration of 1: 5,000, with over **60%** in unmet dental needs.⁹

- 7,826 additional dentists would be required to meet the needs of the underserved in the dental shortage areas.⁹
- Hispanic and African American dentists are proportionally less represented in the profession when compared to the U.S. population; African Americans represent only 3.8 percent of practicing dentists.¹⁰
- People who suffer disproportionately from tooth decay, tooth infection, and gum disease: people of color, residents of low-income, residents of rural communities, disabled individuals and elderly. These people are less likely to visit a dentist than urban, Caucasian, and financially stable individuals.
- Scientific Research supports the link between oral health, cardiovascular disease, lung disease, kidney disease, and mental health

Links Programs that Address Oral Health

- **Children's Oral Health:** *Since 2009, Links In partnership with Colgate Bright Smiles Bright Futures provided free dental education, screenings and treatment referral of more than 1.2 million children across the U.S.*
- **Colgate BSBF Community Award:** *To recognize and applaud Links efforts, Colgate will again, present the Links Area Bright Smiles Impact grants. Two chapters from each Area who have screened the most and reached the most children during the program year 2018 to 2019 will receive a grant for their impact in the community. We hope that you will continue to encourage children to keep healthy smiles for a lifetime.*
- **Adult Oral Health: In partnership with the National Dental Association (NDA):** The NDA-HEALTH NOW™ initiative provides services, education and access to underserved communities and works to 1) increase health care access; 2) eliminate disparities; 3) increase health literacy and 4) promote prevention. NDA-HEALTH NOW™ also features and promotes the interests of inter-professional health teams. Since its inception in 2013, NDA-HEALTH NOW has supported and/or implemented 117 programs in 15 cities and 7 countries. The results include nearly 50,000 direct beneficiaries including children and adults and over 1M mass media and social media exposures.
- **Adults & Children:** Partnerships with Howard University College of Dentistry, Meharry College of Dentistry, Local Governments in mission trips and community health fairs providing education on oral health through the life span, screenings, preventive care and minor surgical interventions.
- **Links Chapters:** Links Oral Health Webinar and Tool Kit