

Oral Health 101

What is Oral Health?

Oral health includes the health of your mouth, including your teeth, gums, throat, and the bones around the mouth.¹

Why is oral health important?

The condition of one's oral health is said to be an accurate indicator of that person's overall health.

According to the Mayo Clinic, poor oral health and bacteria build up can contribute to various diseases and conditions, including:²

- **Endocarditis**
- **Cardiovascular disease**
- **Pregnancy and birth complications.**
- **Pneumonia.**

Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages, leading to the prevention of other health problems.³

Oral health problems are much more common than you may think. Below are some key facts published by the World Health Organization:³

- Oral diseases pose a major health burden for many countries and affect people throughout their lifetime, causing pain, discomfort, disfigurement and even death.
- These diseases share common risk factors with other major noncommunicable diseases.
- It is estimated that oral diseases affect nearly 3.5 billion people.
- Tooth decay in permanent teeth is the most common health condition according to the Global Burden of Disease 2017.
- More than 530 million children suffer from dental caries of primary teeth (milk teeth).

- Severe gum disease, which may result in tooth loss, is also very common, with almost 10% of the global population affected.
- Oral cancer (cancer of the lip or mouth) is one of the three most common cancers in some countries of Asia and the Pacific.
- Treatment for oral health conditions is expensive and usually not part of universal health coverage (UHC). In most high-income countries, dental treatment averages 5% of total health expenditure and 20% of out-of-pocket health expenditure.
- Most low- and middle-income countries are unable to provide services to prevent and treat oral health conditions.
- Factors contributing to oral diseases are an unhealthy diet high in sugar, use of tobacco and harmful use of alcohol.