

## **World Oral Health Day: Care for Your Smile!**

World Oral Health Day (WOHD) is celebrated annually on March 20th. This day is dedicated to promoting awareness of oral health and its impact on overall health, quality of life, and well-being.

Established by the World Dental Federation (FDI) in 2013 and celebrated in more than 130 countries, this annual event aims to empower people with the knowledge and motivation to take charge of their own dental and gum health, which should lead to the development of healthy habits among people of all ages and reduce the global burden of oral disease.

### What you need to know about oral diseases

Oral diseases remain among the most common non-communicable diseases worldwide. Dental caries, gum disease, and oral cancer cause functional limitations, pain, and social discomfort, and often share risk factors with other systemic illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory infections.

Most oral diseases can be prevented or successfully treated if diagnosed early. By educating people about good oral hygiene, balanced diets, regular dental check-ups, and the avoidance of harmful habits like tobacco use and excessive sugar consumption, WOHD seeks to reduce unnecessary suffering and improve general health outcomes.

### Global Themes and Campaigns

The date of March 20 was chosen to reflect a symbolic oral health message: the numeric expression 3/20 suggests that seniors should retain 20 natural teeth at the end of life, children should have 20 primary (baby) teeth, and healthy adults should have 32 teeth with zero cavities – a simple way to remember the importance of a lifetime of good oral care.

World Oral Health Day has adopted annual themes to focus global attention on evolving priorities. For the 2024-2026 campaign, the unifying theme is “A Happy Mouth Is a Happy Mind”, highlighting the psychological and emotional benefits of good oral health – not just the physical aspects. A healthy mouth supports confidence, communication, nutrition, and social engagement, all of which contribute to a person’s mental and emotional well-being.

The World Health Organization (WHO) supports this vision, emphasizing that oral health is a key indicator of overall health and quality of life. In its 2025 statement, WHO noted that oral diseases cause physical pain, functional limitations, and negative emotional effects, and called on countries – especially those facing high disease burdens – to intensify prevention and control efforts.

World Oral Health Day is being celebrated with educational seminars and information campaigns on the need for regular checkups and a healthy lifestyle. Institutions organize free consultations, distributing practical oral care recommendations, and provide parents with advice on preventing dental diseases in

children. Educational sessions are held for children and teachers aimed at developing proper oral hygiene habits.

### In Our Country

In the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Health has approved a Program for the Prevention of Major Dental Diseases for all categories of the population.

The key points emphasized by the Prevention Program are:

- Proper and thorough oral hygiene at least twice a day (morning and evening after meals);
- Use fluoride-containing toothpaste for oral hygiene in concentrations according to age recommendations:
  - Children under 6 years old – 500 ppm fluoride, the size of a small pea;
  - Children over 6 years old, adolescents, and adults – 1100-1500 ppm fluoride, 1-1.5 cm of size;
- Regular preventative dental visits at least twice a year;
- Healthy diet - at least three meals a day, avoiding excess carbohydrates, especially sugars, and their prolonged presence in the mouth.

### Why Oral Health Matters

Good oral health is integral to overall health. Poor conditions in the mouth can lead to pain, difficulty eating and speaking, and decreased self-confidence. They can also act as early warning signs or contributors to systemic health issues. Regular brushing with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, balanced nutrition with limited sugary foods, avoidance of tobacco products, and routine dental visits are foundational habits recommended by health professionals to prevent oral diseases.

As World Oral Health Day continues to grow in reach and impact, it reminds everyone – from individuals and families to health systems and policymakers – that caring for your mouth is caring for your life. Whether through international campaigns, community activities, or daily personal habits, the call to action remains clear: healthy mouths lead to healthier, happier lives for people everywhere.

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