



Fact Sheet

Oral Health in America Advances and Challenges

A Report from the National Institutes of Health

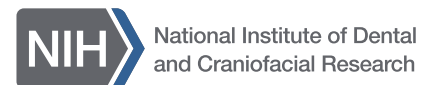
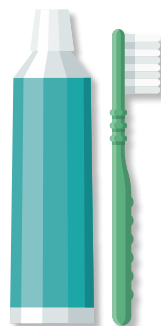
Section 2B: Oral Health Across the Lifespan: Adolescents

Key Summary

- Adolescence is a critical time for establishing independent and positive lifelong oral health habits, even more so because many adolescents may lose eligibility for dental insurance as they enter adulthood.
- About half of all adolescents will experience dental caries; there has been little improvement in the past 20 years.
- Gum disease, dental erosion, and misalignment of the upper and lower teeth are concerns that first appear during adolescence. Adolescents are also prone to sports injuries affecting the mouth and face.
- Risk-taking behaviors that commonly occur in adolescence, such as tobacco and substance use, as well as the first occurrence of some mental health problems, can affect adolescents' long-term oral health.
- Adolescence is the best time for vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes most oropharyngeal cancers. Oral health professionals are uniquely situated to provide HPV vaccinations.

Call to Action

- Adolescence is a life stage that has been largely neglected by researchers and practitioners in oral health. Policy, education, and research opportunities should be developed to address the unique oral health challenges of this group.



www.nidcr.nih.gov/oralhealthinamerica

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