

HOW DENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS OVERALL WELLBEING THROUGHOUT LIFE



Oral health plays a huge role in an individual's overall health. From birth to older adulthood, the connection between one's teeth and their body's wellbeing evolves and presents different challenges at each life stage.

Why Medical-Dental Integration Matters

This is exactly why medical-dental integration (MDI) makes so much sense. Oral health needs change as people age, and MDI addresses the evolving connections between dental health and overall wellbeing at every stage of life. It maximizes preventive opportunities and ensures patients get comprehensive care when they need it most.

LIFE STAGES AND ORAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS



Pregnancy and Postpartum

Good oral health during pregnancy actually reduces risks of problems like preterm birth and low birthweight. Working together, OBGYNs and dentists can address unique oral health challenges while protecting both mom and baby.

Childhood

Early cavities can significantly affect a child's play, school performance, sleep, eating habits and overall wellbeing. They also pose risks of infection and complications from the general anesthesia often needed for treatment. Pediatricians and dentists can collaborate on early intervention, help kids establish good oral health habits and spot developmental concerns.

Adolescence

Teens face oral health risks from vaping (which is linked to gum disease), sports injuries, oral piercings and increased sugar consumption. Integrated care can address orthodontic needs alongside physical development, while screening for behaviors that impact overall health.

Young Adulthood

This is when eating disorders (linked to dental erosion) and tobacco/alcohol use (increasing oral cancer risk) often begin. Coordinated care allows for comprehensive management of health conditions that affect or are affected by oral health.

Middle Age

Gum disease becomes more common and is closely linked to conditions like diabetes, kidney disease and high blood pressure, making them harder to manage.

Older Adulthood

Poor dental health has been linked to higher chances of Alzheimer's, other forms of dementia and pneumonia. Older people with fewer than 20 teeth often have more problems with thinking and daily activities. As medication use increases, dental professionals can help monitor side effects, while physicians consider oral health implications when prescribing.

BENEFITS OF MEDICAL-DENTAL INTEGRATION

MDI recognizes that treating people as whole individuals, rather than separating oral care and medical care, leads to better health outcomes and improves access. It also breaks down healthcare barriers for people who face challenges accessing dental care, including those with lower incomes, communities of color, people with disabilities, rural residents and formerly incarcerated individuals.

MDI creates a seamless healthcare experience by allowing patients to receive comprehensive care in settings they already visit. It encourages collaboration among different healthcare providers regardless of location.

Visit [DentaQuest.com](https://www.dentaquest.com) to learn more about our MDI initiatives, efforts to improve health outcomes and lower costs and to join our provider network.



Sugar-sweetened drinks and foods can raise the risk of obesity and tooth decay at any age!



MDI Provides:



Personalized, integrated care plans that reduce emergency room visits



Significant decreases in overall healthcare costs



High provider satisfaction with integrated models



Early detection of health conditions during dental visits



Better management of chronic diseases

Reference

"Oral-Systemic Interactions and Medical-Dental Integration: A Life Course Approach." n.d. CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. <https://www.carequest.org/resource-library/oral-systemic-interactions-and-medical-dental-integration-life-course-approach>.

DQ3716 (5.25)



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