ORAL HEALTH
PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Harford County Health Department

OVERVIEW OF ORAL HEALTH [1]

Oral health is the state of the mouth, teeth, and orofacial structures that enable individuals to perform essential functions such as eating, breathing, and speaking. It is an essential part of overall health and wellness since the mouth is the entry point to your digestive and respiratory tracts. Oral health can affect psychosocial dimensions such as self-confidence, well-being, and the ability to socialize and work without any discomfort or pain.

When oral health begins to lack, bacteria can lead to infection and disease, which can include, cavities (tooth decay), periodontal (gum) disease, tooth loss, oral cancer, and oro-dental trauma. Oral diseases are among the most common noncommunicable diseases worldwide, affecting about 3.5 billion people yearly.

Risk factors
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol consumption
- Unhealthy diet
- Not brushing or flossing teeth regularly
- Not attending biannual dentist appointments

DENTAL SERVICES AT HCHD [6]

Harford County Health Department offers dental services to children ages 1-20 who are enrolled in the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP), and pregnant and postpartum women on the Medical Assistance Program who may not have previously had access to dental care.

Hygiene Services include: x-rays, cleanings, sealants, fluoride treatment, home oral health care instructions, and nutrition education

Dental Services include: Restorations (fillings), extractions, root canals, crowns, space maintainers for missing primary (baby) teeth, and referrals for specialty care

As of 2022, 8,500 children and pregnant women have been served at the HCHD Dental Clinic. The clinic also offers same-day emergency care to those with infections and trauma.

Our clinic at 2204 Hanson Road, in Edgewood, MD, operates Monday-Friday 8:00 am-4:30 pm

Our 1 N. Main Family Health Center in Bel Air, MD, operates Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 8:00 am-4:30 pm

To make an appointment, call 443-922-7670.

DATA

Adults (18+) who have visited an oral health clinician in the past year.

Maryland	66.80%
Harford County	65.90%

Last dentist visit for a check-up, exam, teeth cleaning, or other dental work? (ages 15-18) [2]

During the past 12 months	81.70%
Between 12 and 24 months	8.70%
More than 24 months ago	3.60%
Never	0.80%
Not sure	5.20%

Last dentist visit for a check-up, exam, teeth cleaning, or other dental work? (ages 11-14) [3]

During the past 12 months	77.00%
Between 12 and 24 months	5.90%
More than 24 months ago	1.90%
Never	0.90%
Not sure	14.30%

Had teeth removed because of tooth decay or gum disease. [4]

Maryland	58.90%
Harford County	64.00%

SPOTLIGHT:
ORAL HEALTH & HEART DISEASE [5]

Research show that there is a link between poor oral health and cardiovascular disease, or heart disease. When an individual has poor oral health, the bacteria from the mouth can infect the gums, causing gingivitis and periodontitis, which can eventually lead to bacteria traveling to the blood vessels. When this bacteria gets into the vessels, it can cause inflammation and damage, tiny blood clots, heart attack, and stroke.

Poor oral health can also cause heart disease by causing inflammation which allows the immune system to be alerted and cause vascular damage throughout the body, including the heart.

PREVENTION [1]

Oral disease and infections can easily be prevented with proper care. This includes:
- Brushing teeth twice, daily, with fluoride-containing toothpaste
- Attending bi-yearly dentist appointments, if possible
- Well-balanced, low-sugar diet
- Refraining from all forms of tobacco use
- Reducing alcohol consumption
- Use of protective equipment when doing sports and traveling on bicycles and motorcycles

Sources:
1. World Health Organization
2. Maryland High School Survey. Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey. 2018-2019.
3. Maryland Middle School Survey. Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey. 2018-2019.
4. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey. 2018, 2020..
5. Harvard Health
6. Harford County Health Department