

There is a large health disparity in minority populations concerning oral health care—only 34% of Black males reach the 5 year survival rate after an oral cancer diagnosis compared to 56% of White males. There are limited programs targeting minority communities to improve oral health.

Quick Facts

- ◇ Employed adults lose 164 million hours of work every year due to oral health problems.
- ◇ Blacks and Hispanics are twice as likely to have tooth and gum decay than Whites.
- ◇ Annually, 35,000 people are diagnosed with oral cancer.
- ◇ Lower income and education are linked to more untreated tooth decay.

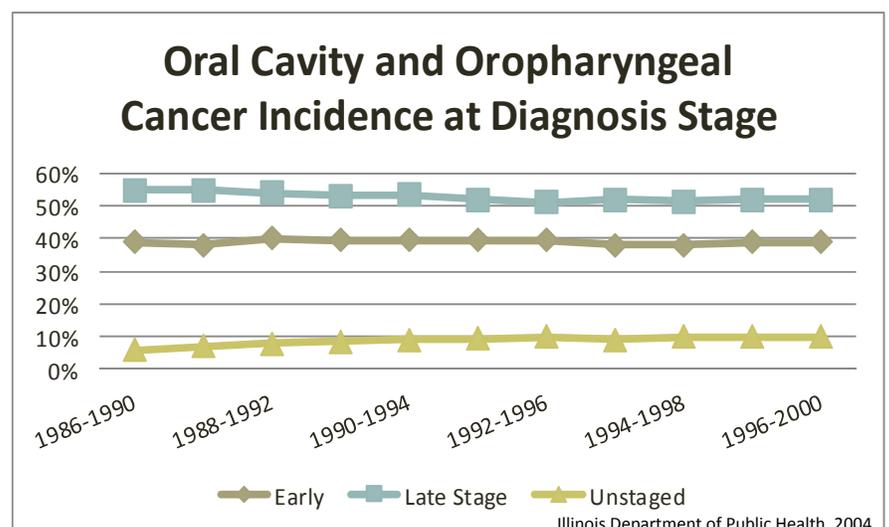


Most Common Oral Health Conditions Among Adults			
Oral Health Condition	Symptoms	Possible Causes	Solutions
Toothaches	Mouth and facial pain, throbbing pain, sensitivity, headaches, difficulty eating	Cavities, wisdom teeth, cracked tooth, grinding teeth, or stress	See a dentist; for home remedies use: ibuprofen, numbing gel, toothpaste for sensitive teeth
Gum Disease	Weak, bloody or painful gums	Plaque build-up, smoking	Brush and floss regularly, have dental appointments every 6 months
Oral Cancer	Persistent oral changes, sores, swelling in throat or mouth	Smoking, excessive drinking, age, diet	Early detection

Proper Care

Many adults do not understand oral health information. Educating individuals of proper oral health care is as simple as teaching them to:

- ⇒ Floss and brush twice daily, using fluoride toothpaste.
- ⇒ Visit the dentist regularly (every 6 months).
- ⇒ Eat healthy foods.
- ⇒ Stop tobacco use and limit alcohol intake.



The figure above demonstrates the lack of primary oral care; many diagnoses were discovered at later stages regardless of race, income or education.

Evidence Based Interventions to Improve Oral Health

- **Body and Soul:** Body and Soul is sponsored through the NIH and focuses on educating communities about proper nutrition, specifically increasing intake of fruits and vegetables (F&V). Direct focus is given to changes in diet, motivation and efficacy to eat F&V, and social support.
- **Mouth Self-Examination Promotion Program (MSE):** MSE is an educational program directed towards individuals who are at high-risk for oral cancer. Participants learn about risk factors, and ways to detect oral problems through a self-exam.
- **Wellness Outreach at Work:** Wellness is a prevention program that seeks to reduce substance abuse of tobacco and alcohol in adults. A comprehensive screening is completed for all participants (at the worksite) while follow-up is scheduled for high-risk persons.

Conclusion

- Data suggests that good oral health can be attributed to proper oral care, healthy diet, avoidance of tobacco and low alcohol consumption.
- Due to low health literacy levels in low-income adults, oral education is necessary to promote good oral health.
- Prevention of oral decay should be a priority because many severe conditions are discovered late stage, which results in oral or gum disease, or tooth decay and loss.

Additional Resources

- American Dental Association: <http://www.ada.org/2996.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/>
- Community Health Improvements Resources: <http://health.mo.gov/data/interventionmica/oralhealth/>
- Evidence Based Disease and Disability Prevention Program: http://www.aoa.gov/AoA_programs/HPW/Evidence_Based/index.aspx
- National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research: <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/FindingDentalCare/default.htm>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov>
- To Find Oral Health Care: <http://www.hrsa.gov/publichealth/clinical/oralhealth/index.html>

Sources: CDC. (2006, Nov). Oral health for adults. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/factsheets/adult.htm>; Cohen, L., Bonito, A., Akin, D., Manski, R., Macek, M., Edwards, R., & Cornelius, L. (2009). Toothache pain: Behavioral impact and self-care strategies. *Special Care in Dentistry*, 29(2). Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19284508>; "How to Relieve a Toothache" 12 April 2006. HowStuffWorks.com. <http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/oral-care/problems/how-to-deal-with-toothache.htm> 23 May 2012.; Heirick, M., & Sieck, C. (2008, June). Wellness outreach at work. Retrieved from <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=56>; Jones, M., Lee, J., & Rozier, R. (2007). Oral health literacy among adults patients seeking dental care. *Journal of American Dental Association*, 138(9), 1199-208. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17785385>; Resnicow, K., Campbell, M., Carr, C., Mearthy, F., Wang, T., Rohotep, S., Doyle, C., & Williams, A. (2005). Body and soul. a dietary intervention conducted through african-american churches. 28(1), 142. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15261895>; Savvy Senior. (2012, June 5). Recent columns. Retrieved from <http://>

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