

ORAL HEALTH REPORT

MEN vs. WOMEN

ORAL HEALTH DIFFERENCES

Learn more about the differences in men and women's oral health, from their selfcare and healthcare service behaviors to their genetics.

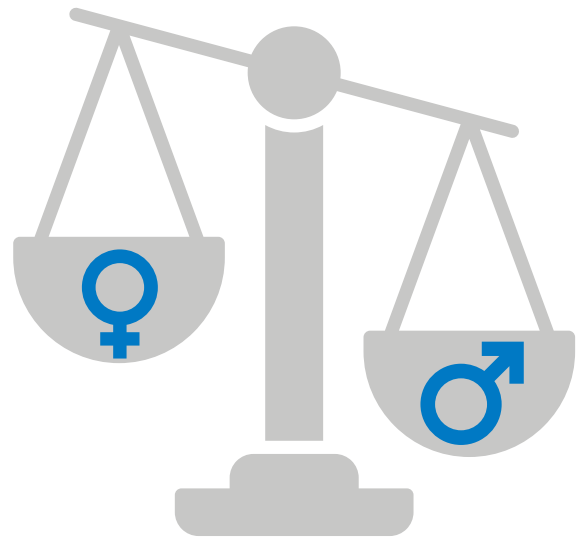


Do sex and gender play a role in oral health?

Gender differences in the usage of healthcare services do exist, but not necessarily in the ways we may expect.

Studies have shown that women are more likely to seek out medical services overall, but men are more likely to prioritize certain types of medical care such as emergency services and surgical procedures. Even in the event of a serious illness, roughly 60% of men avoid care ([Hsiao et al., 2010](#)). Additionally, **women are more likely to use preventative care services** like gynecological exams and mammograms, while men are less likely to seek out routine check-ups ([Thompson et al., 2016](#)). Sex and gender related disparities in oral health follow similar usage patterns. These patterns may be influenced by societal expectations as well as differences in health concerns and risks between genders.

Health Behaviors of Men & Women Differ



Although many of us are aware of the physical differences between men and women, did you know that there are also differences in our oral health? When it comes to gender differences, **women tend to have better overall oral health than men** ([Furuta et al., 2011](#)). This oral health advantage could be attributed to their perception that oral health enhances appearance, well-being, and quality of life ([McGrath & Bedi, 2000](#)), or it could be due to the better oral health behaviors women demonstrate. Research has shown that women are more likely to visit the dentist regularly and adhere to good oral hygiene habits, such as brushing and flossing daily ([Lee et al., 2012](#); [Fleming et al., 2018](#)). Hormonal fluctuations throughout a woman's life – from menstruation to menopause – can, however, adversely affect oral health, making the mouth more vulnerable to cavities and gum disease ([QWH, 2021](#)). Studies also indicate that women have a greater likelihood of developing cavities, while men are more susceptible to oral cancers ([Neville & Day, 2002](#)).

**While sex refers to biological factors related to genetics, physiology, and anatomy, gender relates to social roles, behaviors, attitudes, and identities.*

Oral Health Differences between Women and Men

It's important for both men and women to stay on top of their oral health with regular check-ups and proper hygiene practices, but understanding gender differences can help us take even better care of our teeth and gums.



Women tend to have better oral health and oral health behaviors than men.

(Furuta et al., 2011)

Women are more likely than men to ...

POSITIVES

- Take better care of their oral health ([McGrath & Bedj, 2000](#)).
- View oral health as enhancing their life quality ([McGrath & Bedj, 2000](#)).
- Have a positive attitude and be more educated about oral health ([Furuta et al., 2011](#)).
- Brush teeth regularly and floss daily ([Lee et al., 2012](#); [Fleming et al., 2018](#)).

NEGATIVES

- Get cavities ([Ferraro & Vieira, 2010](#)).
- Suffer temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders ([Manfredini et al., 2006](#)).
- Experience dry mouth after the age of 50, which can lead to oral health problems ([Billings et al., 1996](#)).
- Report more financial and access barriers to oral healthcare ([Ioannidu, 2017](#)).
- Have hormonal effects that hurt their oral health ([OWH, 2021](#)).

Oral Health Differences between Men and Women

Behavior plays a big role in oral health.

Generally, men tend to exhibit riskier behaviors than women with habits like tobacco and marijuana use ([Rechthand & Bashirelahi, 2016](#)).

Smoking and chewing tobacco raise the risk for oral cancer, cavities, and tooth loss ([Abuse, 2020](#)).



Men are 40% less likely to brush their teeth after every meal than women.

([Delta Dental, 2024](#))

Men are more likely than women to ...

NEGATIVES

- Not seek preventive dental care ([Delta Dental, 2024](#)).
- Not floss and not brush their teeth after every meal ([Delta Dental, 2024](#)).
- Experience gingivitis and develop gum disease ([Shiau & Reynolds, 2010](#)).
- Lose their teeth as they age ([Dye et al., 2015](#)).
- Use tobacco more frequently, which impacts oral health ([Abuse, 2020](#) and [Winn, 2001](#)).
- Develop mouth cancer ([Neville & Day, 2002](#)).
- Experience dental trauma due to contact sports and risky behaviors ([Lipsky et al., 2021](#)).

Behavior Influences Oral Health

It's a fact that people with fewer dental visits experience more tooth decay ([Peres et al., 2020](#)). It's also true that tooth loss can result from cavities and although women have more cavities than men in their lifetime and should experience a greater loss of teeth, they do not. This demonstrates that **gender differences in education, attitude, oral hygiene, and health behaviors can have a tempering effect on genetic and biological influences.** ([Dye et al., 2015](#)).



Improving our Understanding of Oral Health Relative to Sex and Gender

Sex and gender related health disparities in oral health continue to be underappreciated and overlooked relative to well-being. There is, however, an emphasis to improve oral health by addressing both sexes and the differences between them in Healthy People 2030 ([Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d](#)). Understanding these differences and patterns can help healthcare providers tailor services to better meet the needs of all patients.



Benevis is a leading dental healthcare organization for practices focused on delivering critical oral care and orthodontics to underserved communities. Through comprehensive care and operational services that expand access to dentistry, Benevis has a 20-year history of providing the highest quality care to approximately 5 million children and adults. Its network reaches more than 100 dental offices across the U.S. that deliver treatment during 1.4 million visits each year. Benevis also advocates for programs and legislation that ensure all families have access to the oral healthcare they need and deserve.

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