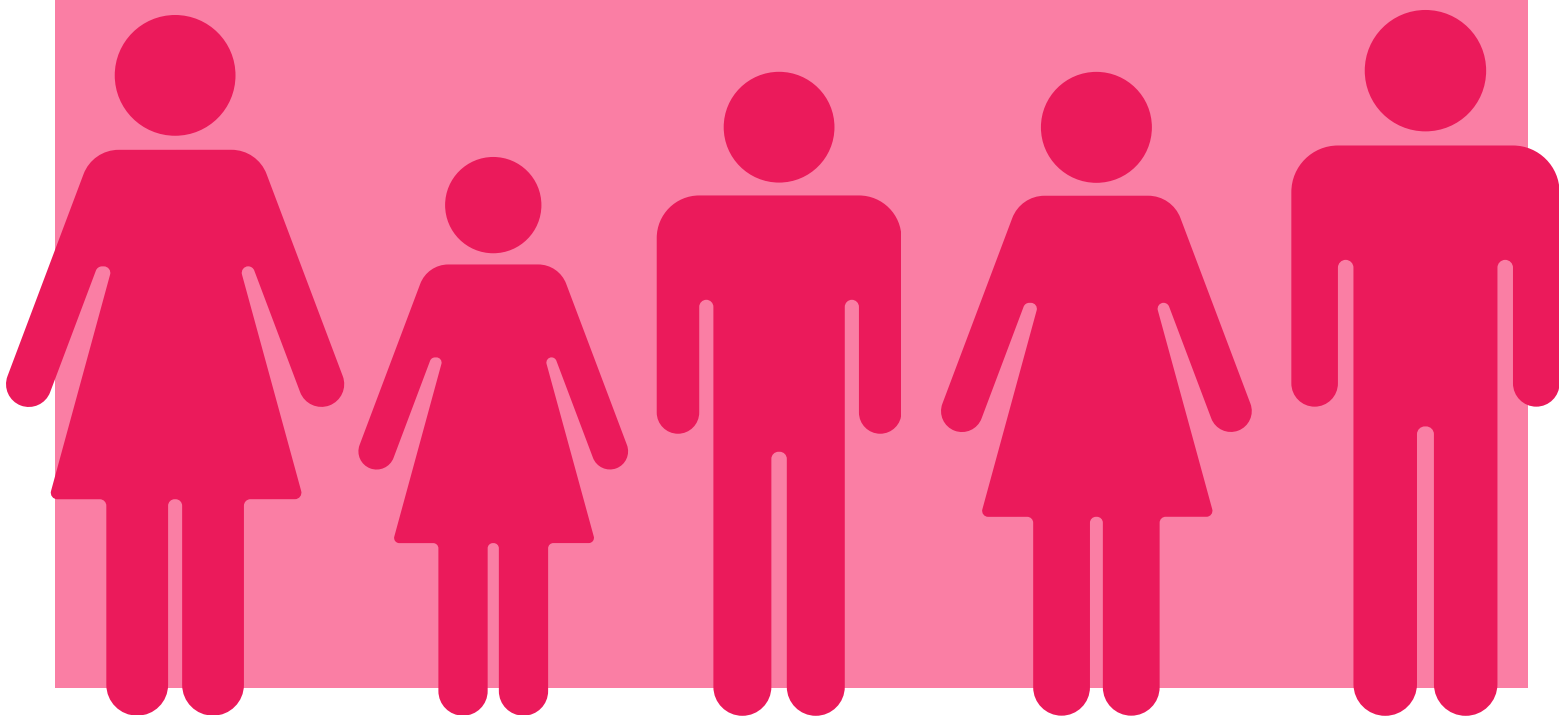


ORAL HEALTH REPORT

WOMEN VS. MEN

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



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 might expect.

Studies have shown that women are more likely to seek out medical services overall, while 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 (1). Additionally, **women are more likely to use preventive care services** like gynecological exams and mammograms, while men are less likely to seek routine checkups (2). 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 perceived by men and women.



Women's & Men's Health Behaviors 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 and care? Relative to gender, **women tend to have better overall oral health than men** (3). This oral health advantage could be attributed to their perception that oral health enhances appearance, well-being, and quality of life (4), 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 (5; 6). 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 (7). Studies also indicate that women have a greater likelihood of developing cavities, while men are more susceptible to oral cancers (8).

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

Oral Health Differences between Women and Men

It's important for both women and men 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 (3).

Women are more likely than men to ...

POSITIVES

- + Take better care of their oral health (4).
- + View oral health as enhancing their life quality (4).
- + Have a positive attitude and be more educated about oral health (3).
- + Brush teeth regularly and floss daily (5; 6).

NEGATIVES

- Get cavities (9).
- Suffer temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders (10).
- Experience dry mouth after the age of 50, which can lead to oral health problems (11).
- Report more financial and access barriers to oral healthcare (12).
- Have hormonal effects that hurt their oral health (7).

Oral Health in Pregnant and Postpartum Women

It's crucial for women to maintain good oral health while they are pregnant, given the proven links between their overall health and the health of their child (13).

A pregnant woman's health is inseparably linked to her baby's health (13).



- Hormonal changes in pregnancy raise the risk of oral disease.
- Oral health issues can increase the likelihood of poor birth outcomes and worsen underlying conditions. Black women experience these complications more often than white women.
- Poor oral health can make diabetes and hypertension worse, placing pregnant women at a higher risk for depression and other harmful health outcomes.
- Negative birth outcomes are linked to neglected oral health in pregnancy, including preeclampsia (high blood pressure in pregnancy), preterm birth, and infants with low birth weight.
- There is a direct association between children's oral health outcomes and the birthing parent's dental and dietary health habits (13).

One of the most persistent barriers to oral healthcare in pregnancy is a false fear that dental treatment is not safe during this time. Many pregnant women avoid care for this reason. The high costs of dental care also inhibit women from pursuing treatment. To eliminate these barriers, oral care should be a standard part of the healthcare experience during and after pregnancy. As recently as 2022, every state in the U.S. plus the District of Columbia provides pregnant and postpartum Medicaid enrollees dental coverage for 60 days post-birth. Although this is an improvement, extending postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months would benefit women's oral health more (13).

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 (14). Smoking and chewing tobacco raise the risk for oral cancer, cavities, and tooth loss (15).



Men are 40% less likely to brush their teeth after every meal than women (17).

Men are more likely than women to ...

NEGATIVES

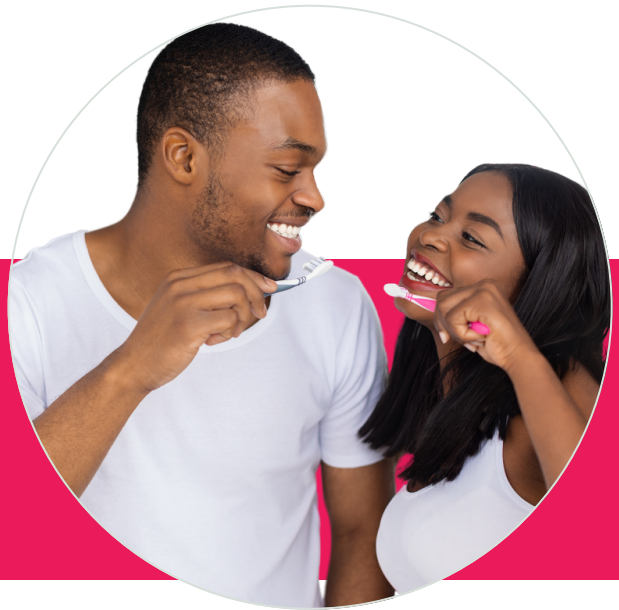
- Not seek preventive dental care (16).
- Not brush their teeth after every meal (17).
- Experience gingivitis and develop gum disease (18).
- Lose their teeth as they age (19).
- Use tobacco more frequently, which impacts oral health (15, 20).
- Develop mouth cancer (8).
- Experience dental trauma due to contact sports and risky behaviors (21).

Additionally, men from minorities carry a heavier burden of oral health disparities as a result of gender, racial, and ethnic identity (22).

Behavior Influences Oral Health

It's a fact that people with fewer dental visits experience more tooth decay (23). 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. Why?

Education, attitude, health behaviors, and oral hygiene can have a tempering effect on genetics and biology (19).



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 (24). As recently as March 18, 2024, President Joe Biden signed a historic Executive Order to advance Women's Health Research (25). Understanding the differences and patterns relative to sex and gender can help healthcare providers tailor services to better meet the needs of all patients.

References

- 1-Hsiao CJ, Cherry DK, Beatty PC, Rechtsteiner EA. National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: 2007 summary. *Natl Health Stat Report*. 2010 Nov 3;(27):1-32. PMID: 21089986.
- 2-Thompson AE, Anisimowicz Y, Miedema B, Hogg W, Wodchis WP, Aubrey-Bassler K. The influence of gender and other patient characteristics on health care-seeking behaviour: a QUALICOPC study. *BMC Fam Pract*. 2016 Mar 31;17:38. doi: 10.1186/s12875-016-0440-0. PMID: 27036116; PMCID: PMC4815064.
- 3-Furuta M, Ekuni D, Irie K, Azuma T, Tomofuji T, Ogura T, Morita M. Sex Differences in Gingivitis Relate to Interaction of Oral Health Behaviors in Young People. 2011 Apr 1. *Journal of Periodontology*, vol. 82, no. 34, pp. 558-565, <https://doi.org/10.1902/jop.2010.100444>
- 4-Mc Grath C, Bedi R. Gender variations in the social impact of oral health. *J Ir Dent Assoc*. 2000;46(3):87-91. PMID: 11323941.
- 5-Lee JY, Divaris K, Baker AD, Rozier RG, Vann WF Jr, 2012: The Relationship of Oral Health Literacy and Self-Efficacy With Oral Health Status and Dental Neglect. *American Journal of Public Health* 102, 923_929, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300291>
- 6-Fleming EB, Nguyen D, Afful J, Carroll MD, Woods PD. Prevalence of daily flossing among adults by selected risk factors for periodontal disease—United States, 2011–2014. 2018 Apr 12. *Journal of Periodontology*, vol. 89, no. 8, pp. 933-939, <https://doi.org/10.1002/JPER.17-0572>
- 7-Office on Women’s Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. OASH website. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/oral-health>. Published February 22, 2021. Accessed April 11, 2024.
- 8-Neville BW, DDS, Day TA, MD, FACS. Oral Cancer and Precancerous Lesions. 2002 Jul-Aug. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, *The American Cancer Society*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 195-215, <https://doi.org/10.3322/canjclin.52.4.195>
- 9-Ferraro M, Vieira AR. Explaining Gender Differences in Caries: A Multifactorial Approach to a Multifactorial Disease. *International Journal of Dentistry*, vol. 2010, Article ID 649643, 5 pages, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2010/649643>

References

- 10-Manfredini D, Chiappe G, Bosco M. Research Diagnostic Criteria for Temporomandibular Disorders (RDC/TMD) axis I diagnoses in an Italian patient population. 2006 Jul 6. *Journal of Oral Rehabilitation*, vol. 33, no. 8, pp. 551-558, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2842.2006.01600.x>
- 11-Billings RJ, Proskin HM, Moss ME. Xerostomia and associated factors in a community-dwelling adult population. 1996 Oct. *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology*, vol. 24, no. 5, pp. 312-316, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0528.1996.tb00868.x>
- 12-Ioannidou E. The Sex and Gender Intersection in Chronic Periodontitis. 2017 Aug. *Frontiers in Public Health* 5:189, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2017.00189>
- 13-Auger S, Preston R, Tranby EP, Heaton LJ. The Role of Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits During Pregnancy and Postpartum. Boston, MA: CareQuest Institute, April 2023. DOI: 10.35565/CQI.2023.2006 Copyright ©2023 CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, Inc.
- 14-Rechthand MM, Bashirelahi N. What every dentist needs to know about cannabis. *Gen Dent*. 2016 Jan-Feb;64(1):40-3. PMID: 26742166.
- 15-NIDA. 2021, April 12. Are there gender differences in tobacco smoking? <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/tobacco-nicotine-e-cigarettes/are-there-gender-differences-in-tobacco-smoking>. Accessed April 11, 2024.
- 16-Delta Dental website. The importance of men's oral health. Published January 2017. https://www.deltadentalins.com/oral_health/mens-oral-health.html. Accessed April 11, 2024.
- 17-Dentistry A.O.G. April 2007. Why is Oral Health Important for Men. Academy of General Dentistry website. <http://knowyourteeth.com/infobites/abc/article/?abc=M&iid=312&aid=1266>. Accessed April 11, 2024.
- 18-Shiau HJ, Reynolds MA. Sex Differences in Destructive Periodontal Disease: Exploring the Biologic Basis. 2010 Nov 1. *Journal of Periodontology*, vol. 81, no. 11, pp. 1505-1517, <https://doi.org/10.1902/jop.2010.100045>

References

19-Dye B, Thornton-Evans G, Li X, Iafolla T. Dental caries and tooth loss in adults in the United States, 2011-2012. *NCHS Data Brief*. 2015 May;(197):197. PMID: 25973996.

20-Winn DM. Tobacco use and oral disease. *J Dent Educ*. 2001 Apr;65(4):306-12. PMID: 11336115.

21-Lam R. Epidemiology and outcomes of traumatic dental injuries: a review of the literature. *Australian Dental Journal*. 2016 Mar;61 Suppl 1:4-20. doi: 10.1111/adj.12395. PMID: 26923445.

22-Lipsky MS, Su S, Crespo CJ, Hung M. Men and Oral Health: A Review of Sex and Gender Differences. *Am J Mens Health*. 2021 May-Jun;15(3):15579883211016361. doi: 10.1177/15579883211016361. PMID: 33993787; PMCID: PMC8127762.

23-Peres K. G., Ha D. H., Christofis S. (2020). Trend and distribution of coronal dental caries in Australian adults. *Australian Dental Journal*, 65(Suppl 1), S32-S39.

24-Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Oral Health. Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/oral-conditions>. Accessed April 11, 2024.

25-NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) website. President Biden Issues Executive Order on Advancing Women's Health Research and Innovation. Published March 21, 2024. <https://orwh.od.nih.gov/in-the-spotlight/all-articles/president-biden-issues-executive-order-on-advancing-womens-health-research-and-innovation>. Accessed April 11, 2024.



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.

benevis.com | solutions@benevis.com

© 2024 New Benevis, Inc. All Rights Reserved.