

# The World looks at Oral Health

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Assembled from FDI data by **Marilize van der Linde**.



**World Oral Health Day (WOHD)** is celebrated each year on 20 March. It is the culmination of a year-long campaign dedicated to raising global awareness on the prevention and control of oral disease. WOHD spreads messages about good oral hygiene practices to adults and children alike and demonstrates the importance of optimal oral health in maintaining general health and well-being. It also aims to raise the profile of oral health on the global health and development agenda by highlighting the social and economic impacts of oral disease.

WOHD is the largest global awareness campaign on oral health. Each year, it focuses on a specific theme and reaches out to the general public, oral health professionals and policymakers, who all have a role to play in helping reduce the burden of oral disease. WOHD inspires them to take action.

In a world where 90% of the population will suffer from oral disease during their lifetime, WOHD is a key date in the oral health community agenda. It's an occasion when people around the globe unite to put the spotlight on the immense burden caused by oral disease and is an opportunity to remind our target audiences that investment in prevention yields dividends in oral health and general health. It is also a day to salute the hard work of dental practitioners and the dental industry to improve the state of oral health in the world.

The 2017 campaign theme: **'Live Mouth Smart'** empowers people to take control of their oral health – throughout life – so they can enjoy a healthy, functional mouth from childhood into old age.

It conveys the message that by making smart decisions such as adopting good oral hygiene habits, avoiding risk factors and having a regular dental check-up, oral disease can be prevented. The imagery is positive and focuses on oral health as much more than a nice smile. It highlights how basic oral functions that are core to life – ability to speak, smile, sigh and kiss, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow and convey a world of emotions through facial expressions – are affected and how this relates to physiological, social and psychological well-being. The campaign strives to make people understand the broad consequences of oral disease and how poor oral health affects general health and well-being. It stresses the impact of oral disease on various aspects of a person's social life, which can lead to low self-esteem, diminished social interactions, poor school performance, lack of confidence, and meagre employment prospects. All stakeholders – general public, oral health professionals and policymakers – must work together to address the disease burden and take the necessary action so that populations can **Live Mouth Smart**.

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## ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS:

Help your patients **Live Mouth Smart** by:

**Educating** them on how to prevent and control oral disease, enabling them to avoid any unnecessary pain or suffering and enjoy a better quality of life into old age. You also champion prevention and early detection to help ensure the best patient outcomes through the reduction of oral disease and any associated health complications.

**Teaching good oral hygiene habits**, particularly the importance of brushing twice a day for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste and having regular dental check-ups.

Providing information and guidance on how to control risk factors including tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets – especially those rich in sugar – to help protect the oral health of your patients and prevent other conditions such as heart disease and stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.

**Avoiding surgical intervention** through prompt and efficacious application of preventive care to a specific lesion, once it has been detected and assessed. This provides a very significant opportunity to preserve dental tissue and to stop lesions from ever progressing to the stage at which surgical intervention is required. This aspect of caries care is a priority and should be fully integrated into routine dental practice for all age groups

**Organising** World Oral Health Day activities on 20 March in your practice or work to show your patients/public that you are committed to helping them prevent and control oral disease and are contributing to their overall health and well-being. There are resources, ideas and suggestions for a successful Oral Health Day on the FDI website.

**Nurturing the profession.** Ensuring continuity and vitality of the profession by contributing to Dental Education. One of the most significant opportunities to advance Oral Health globally is to ensure excellence in education for the next generation of dentists. Enthusiasm, participation, commitment amongst our student bodies will be generated by the example of sincere involvement by the profession at large.

**Source acknowledgement:** [www.fdi.com](http://www.fdi.com)