

## Oral Health – A Public Health Issue

NOVEMBER 2007

“Public Health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organized efforts of society.”

John Last, *A Dictionary of Epidemiology*

### Oral health

Oral health contributes to your overall health, growth and development, and mental and social well-being. It affects how well you can eat, speak, maintain proper nutrition, and socialize.

### Oral disease

- Oral diseases, including infectious ones, are among the most prevalent chronic diseases.
- These diseases are tooth decay, oral cancer, and periodontal diseases—serious gum infections that can lead to tooth loss.
- Oral diseases—once considered just localized infections—are now associated with other diseases.<sup>1</sup> There is overwhelming evidence linking sugar consumption to tooth decay. A diet high in fat, sugar and salt also low in fiber is a risk factor for dental cavities, heart disease and obesity.
- Oral pain can have a significant negative impact on your quality of life. On the positive side, a healthy, attractive smile boosts self-esteem and how one is perceived by others.

### Did you know?

- You can't be healthy without oral health.
- Tooth decay has not been eradicated—decay in children's primary teeth predicts future decay in adult teeth.
- In some areas in Canada, dental procedures under general anesthesia are the most common surgical procedures that children receive in hospitals.<sup>2</sup>

- Canadians spend 10 billion dollars a year on oral health care, diseases, and injuries that are almost all preventable. That is 7% of the total public and private health spending in Canada.
- If you smoke, drink alcohol excessively, or have diabetes, then your chances of developing periodontal disease are higher. Smoking and alcohol consumption also increase your risk for oral cancer.
- Oral disease is related to income. People with lower incomes suffer higher rates of disease.
- Government spending on oral health has decreased from 9.0% to 4.6% of total oral health spending in just 15 years.<sup>3</sup>

### What can each of us do?

- Oral disease and oral injuries are preventable. Take control of your oral health with a healthy diet, daily personal oral hygiene and regular oral exams. When playing sports wear a sports mouth guard.
- Advocate for public investments in oral health promotion and disease prevention programs such as school screenings, dental sealants, water fluoridation, injury prevention, and support increased public funding for disadvantaged populations.

1. Lux, J. Review of the Oral Disease—Systemic Disease Link. Part I and II. *Canadian Journal Of Dental Hygiene*, Nov-Dec 2006, Vol. 40(6): 288-342 and Jan-Feb, 2007 Vol. 41(1): 8-21.
2. British Columbia. Provincial health officer's annual report 1997. Victoria: Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors; 1998. p. 92.
3. Canadian Institute for Health Information. Exploring the 70/30 split: how Canada's health care system is financed. Ottawa: CIHI; 2005.

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**S U P P O R T P U B L I C H E A L T H !**

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This message brought to you by the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21)  
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**Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Membership (April 2009)**  
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Association of Canadian Academic HealthCare Organizations	L'Alliance canadienne de la maladie mentale et de la santé mentale
Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health	L'Alliance pour la prévention des maladies chroniques du Canada
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists	L'Ambulance SaintJean
Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists	L'Association canadienne de physiothérapie
Canadian Association for School Health	L'Association canadienne de santé dentaire publique
Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry	L'Association canadienne de santé publique
Canadian Chiropractic Association	L'Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes
Canadian Dental Association	L'Association canadienne des hygiénistes dentaires
Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion	L'Association canadienne des institutions de santé universitaires
Canadian Dental Hygienists Association	L'Association canadienne des soins de santé
Canadian Diabetes Association	L'Association canadienne des médecins vétérinaires
Canadian Healthcare Association	L'Association canadienne du diabète
Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Population and Public Health	L'Association canadienne pour la santé en milieu scolaire
Canadian Medical Association	L'Association chiropratique canadienne
Canadian Nurses Association	L'Association dentaire canadienne
Canadian Paediatric Society	L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers du Canada
Canadian Pharmacists Association	L'Association des pharmaciens du Canada
Canadian Physiotherapy Association	L'Association médicale canadienne
Canadian Psychological Association	L'Association pour la prévention des infections à l'hôpital et dans la communauté
Canadian Public Health Association	L'Association pulmonaire
Canadian Society for International Health	La Coalition canadienne pour la sensibilisation et la promotion de la vaccination
Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science	The Dalla Lana School of Public Health, l'Université de Toronto
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association	Les diététistes du Canada
Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada	La faculté de Santé, l'Université de York
The College of Family Physicians of Canada	L'Institut de recherche Élisabeth-Bruyère
Community & Hospital Infection Control Association Canada	Les Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada, l'Institut de la santé publique et des populations
The Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto	Médecins pour un Canada sans fumée
Dietitians of Canada	SécuriJeunes Canada
Élisabeth-Bruyère Research Institute	La Société canadienne de pédiatrie
Faculty of Health, York University	La Société canadienne de psychologie
National Specialty Society for Community Medicine	La Société canadienne de santé internationale
St. John Ambulance	La Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical
Physicians for a SmokeFree Canada	La Société nationale de spécialistes pour la médecine communautaire
Safe Kids Canada	
The Lung Association	