

WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY

20 March

What is oral health?



World Health
Organization

African Region



What is oral health?

Oral health is the foundation of our lives: it enables us to eat, breathe, and speak. It is integral to general health, and supports individuals' participation in society and achieving their potential.

What are the oral diseases in the WHO African Region? How many people are suffering?

Oral diseases in the region include dental caries (tooth decay), periodontal (gum) disease, oral cancer, oro-facial trauma, oral manifestations of HIV infection, birth defects, and noma.

Oral diseases are the most common diseases in our region, affecting around 480 million people (43.7%), from children to older adults in 2019.

What are the risk factors for oral diseases? How can we prevent oral diseases?

Risk Factors: Oral disease shares common risk factors with other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes.

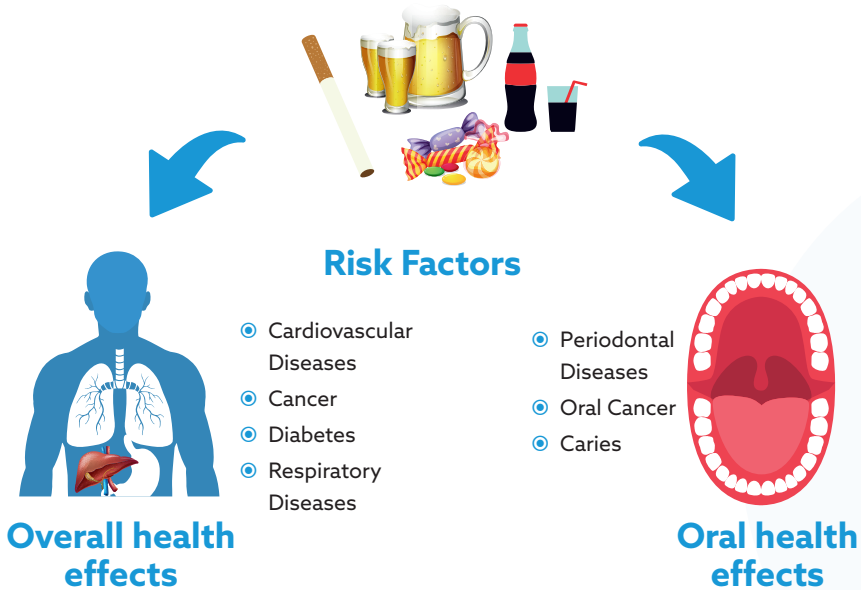
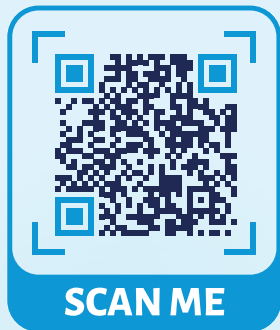


Figure 1 NCDs and oral diseases with common risk factors

Prevention: You can prevent oral diseases by following simple methods, namely, controlling common risk factors, as with other NCDs:

- ▼ **Good Nutrition:** Exclusively breastfeeding for the first six months of life. From six months to two years of age, encourage children to continue breastfeeding and begin incorporating small amounts of food, choosing foods and drinks that do not have added sugars. Afterwards, one should eat nutritious meals. This means limiting added sugars in food and drinks. Sugar can cause obesity, diabetes, and dental caries. A healthy diet is high in fruit, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains, and is low in salt, sugar, trans-fats, and processed foods.
- ▼ **No Tobacco:** Avoid any form of tobacco to reduce the risk of periodontal diseases, oral cancer, and other cancers and respiratory diseases.
- ▼ **Limit Alcohol:** Excessive alcohol can lead to oral cancers and other cancers.
- ▼ **Teeth brushing:** Brush teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day to prevent dental caries and periodontal disease. Important is to spit (and not rinse mouth with water) afterward so that the fluoride remains on the teeth.

More information here:



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