

# ORAL HEALTH NEVADA NEWSLETTER



*Vision: Empowering All Nevadans to have the best oral health possible.*

*November - December 2014*

**Oral Health Nevada Inc.** is a not-for-profit corporation in the state of Nevada whose mission is to improve the oral health of all Nevadans - especially those who are the most vulnerable, by expanding access to affordable preventive and restorative services, promoting oral health education, and expanding communication and support through diverse partnerships.

## New Website Unveiled

After months of researching, planning, designing and writing, Oral Health Nevada's (OHN) new website ([www.oralhealthnevada.com](http://www.oralhealthnevada.com)) is live.

"We envisioned the website to be an information and education hub" said Syd McKenzie, founder of OHN, "a place for residents, professionals and policy makers to learn about, promote and improve dental health and total health."

As the "go-to-place" for credible oral health information and resources it features free multi-lingual fact sheets as well as a Resource Guide for locating no cost and low cost dental care throughout the state. In addition to being able to ask a dental health question from a licensed dental professional, the website includes information on Oral Health Nevada's priorities for the year and an interactive map for stakeholders and decision makers which identifies dental resources within each Nevada County.

Board Chair, Chris Garvey said it best; "I am excited to have a website like this that provides valuable dental information for individuals throughout the state because *oral health matters in Nevada.*"

Tell us what you think about the website... make suggestions for new content through the "Contact Us" option on our home page at [www.oralhealthnevada.com](http://www.oralhealthnevada.com)

## November is National Diabetes Awareness Month

Diabetes is a chronic condition where the body is unable to properly use and store glucose – a form of sugar. The glucose backs up in the blood stream causing a person's blood glucose (or blood sugar) level to go to high. In the United States, 29 million people (9.3 percent of the population) have diabetes and 1.7 million people 20 years of age and older were newly diagnosed in 2012. That does not even touch on 86 million Americans in the same age group that have prediabetes. Yet, diabetes is not an adult disease - more than 208,000 youth are living with diabetes in our country.

The expense of diabetes is staggering. In 2012, \$245 billion was the price tag placed on the total cost of diagnosed diabetes in the United States; \$176 billion for direct medical costs and \$69 billion for reduced productivity. And, these numbers don't take into account risk factors for other chronic diseases that those living with diabetes are susceptible to including hypoglycemia, hypertension, stroke, blindness, and amputations.

### Diabetes in Nevada's Adults

- ✓ **8.5% of Nevada's adults (18 years and older) have diabetes (2010)**
- ✓ **Income nor education play a role in who has diabetes**
- ✓ **Cardiovascular Disease is a major complication of diabetes**

While most people living with diabetes know how important maintaining their health is, many do not know that diabetes can negatively affect their dental health and vice versa. Diabetes can cause changes in the teeth and gums, especially when it is not controlled (Cont'd on page 2)

with a proper treatment plan from the doctor. Diabetes increases the risk for gingivitis (small gum infection), and more seriously, periodontal (gum) disease. Gingivitis can go away with good cleaning of the teeth but, periodontal disease is a long-term infection that destroys the gums and bone holding the teeth. If too much of the gums and bone are lost, the teeth become loose and can fall out. Diabetes can affect the mouth in other ways too; by changing the way people taste food, increasing the time it takes the mouth to heal from cuts or sores, decreasing saliva (dry mouth), and increasing the risk for other infections in the mouth.

Likewise, poor dental health can have an adverse impact on general health. Studies have shown that individuals living with diabetes and who have moderate to severe gum disease have greater difficulty in maintaining appropriate blood sugar levels.

Steps to maintain good oral/dental health are so very important and include regular visits to a dental professional even if no natural teeth are present. Taking the appropriate medications, checking blood glucose (sugar) correctly, regular exercise and eat proper foods as directed by a physician are just as important, as is brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and daily flossing. Finally, not smoking or using alcohol, and self-checking the mouth and teeth for any changes such as cuts, white spots or bleeding while brushing and flossing.

While there is no cure for diabetes, it can be managed and good dental health along with proper diet, exercise and maintaining healthy blood glucose levels is a necessary component for living a long, healthful life.

### Tips for a Merrier Smile During the Holidays

This time of year brings family and friends together to celebrate, often with sweet and sticky foods and drink. These tips are useful for keeping your smile healthy, merry and white.

- **Rinse your mouth with water** to loosen food debris and cleanse your teeth. It will also help to neutralize the acid reducing the risk for tooth decay when tooth brushing isn't an option.
- **Don't snack frequently on sugar foods and drinks**, but rather take breaks to allow salivary pH to neutralize. (Cont'd in the next column)

- **Use sugar-free gum/candies and those with xylitol** to increase saliva and self-cleanse the teeth in between brushing.
- **Toothbrushes and other oral hygiene tools make great gifts** for family and friends and as a hostess gift.

**Happy Holidays from Oral Health Nevada!**



### FLUORINATION FACT

**Fluoride added to water is odorless, colorless and tasteless.**

### Using Mobile Device to Prevent Cavities

With more than 63% of adult cell phone users using their mobile device to go online and mobile app usage on the rise, phones, iPads, tablets and similar devices can become useful tools to improve dental health. A recent inventory of the mobile applications (apps) available in the iTunes Store showed more than 40 available at a nominal cost or free. Some, like *Chomper Chums* and *StarTeeth*, are geared toward children between the ages of 4 and 11, and teach proper tooth brushing techniques and include a timer to assure two-minutes of brushing time. Some apps are interactive, allowing the user to name animated characters that help to make brushing a bit more fun.



Children aren't the only ones who can benefit from the apps. Some dental offices and insurers are offering apps for their patients and members. Also available are apps that explain dental procedures to assist adults in making educated treatment choices and demonstrate appropriate dental hygiene practices. *Dental Expert* and *Dental Genie* for instance, are applications that serve these purposes and are available free-of-charge.

As more individuals are using smart phones and tablets for entertainment and communication they are also becoming a useful and necessary tool for learning about dental issues to support individual and family health and wellness.

*Oral Health Nevada does not endorse any one product or mobile application.*

**Ask us about DONATING to Oral Health Nevada Inc.**