

# ORAL HEALTH NEVADA NEWSLETTER

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



*September - October 2014*

**Welcome** to the first edition of the Oral Health Nevada's bi-monthly newsletter. We are 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.

It is our hope that you will find the work of our organization useful and our quarterly newsletter current and informative - because we believe Nevadans' oral health matters.

## **Poor Oral Health Makes Significant Impact**

Poor oral hygiene can affect the health of the body, causing bacterial infections like tooth decay and periodontal (gum) disease. Oral diseases also share common risk factors with four serious diseases – cardiovascular (heart) disease, diabetes, cancer, and respiratory diseases like pneumonia. Some of these risk factors include being overweight or obese, tobacco use, and harmful alcohol use.

Some facts: 1. Periodontal disease is a risk factor for other diseases that cause inflammation or swelling in the body, such as heart disease and rheumatoid arthritis; 2. Periodontal disease can also influence diabetes control and vice versa; 3. People who have long-term respiratory diseases and use inhalers have a higher risk for oral fungal infections, dry mouth, and caries (cavities); and 4. Many medicines from the pharmacy have the side effect of dry mouth because they decrease the amount of saliva or spit the body makes. Too little saliva increases the risk for cavities and periodontal disease. Not only for your dental health, but for your general health, it's important to be seen by a dental professional at least yearly.

## **FUNDING PUSH FOR ORAL HEALTH**

On July 18th, Oral Health Nevada and other oral health coalitions voted to support a state policy brief and budget request to fund two oral health initiatives during the 2015 legislative session. The first initiative would fund two leadership positions within the state's Office of Oral Health situated in Carson City. Much to the detriment of all Nevadans, these positions, though enacted into law several years ago, have never been funded. Nevada is one of just a few states that has no licensed dental professional with public health training and experience at the helm.

The second initiative calls for an expansion of dental services covered by Medicaid for Nevada residents 21 years of age and older. Currently Nevada Medicaid only pays for emergency dental care – examinations and extractions, for adults. This is not a cost-effective policy. Over the last year, the state has seen an influx of adults seeking dental care from hospital emergency departments where there is usually no dentist available. The patient usually leaves receiving a prescription to control pain and infection and no long term solution. Cont'd on page 2



## Cont'd from page 1 - Funding Push

Oral health not only impacts an individual's ability to chew and digest food, it impacts their ability to communicate, their employability, their general health and well-being. Expanding the dental services available to Medicaid-eligible adults to include prevention and basic treatment makes sense not just for the patient, but for the economic impact it has on the health care system.

For more information on these policy initiatives and to get involved go to [www.oralhealthnevada.com](http://www.oralhealthnevada.com) and look under "Advocacy – Policy Priorities."

## ER Visits Costing Nevadans \$\$

More and more adults are seeking care at hospital emergency departments which usually do not employ dentists. Not only are these residents only receiving emergent care – usually antibiotics and at times pain medication; the cost of this limited treatment to Nevadans is astronomical. For the number of dental related ER visits in 2013, the cost to Nevadans was over **\$12 million** with no long-term treatment provided and residents continuing to experience pain and suffering.

Do you believe this is a cost-effective way of spending taxpayer dollars? Follow us Facebook and Twitter and let us know what you think.

## School + Dental Check-Up = Smart

Each year more than 52 million school hours are lost when students miss school due to dental pain or dental visits. With the school year just beginning, it's important that all school-age children get a dental check-up. Parents should also watch for permission slips offering fluoride and sealant programs in school.



In Nevada, 64% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have experienced tooth decay, while 29% have untreated decay. Children in pain cannot concentrate on their school work to learn. Let's get smart and get checked.

## Nevada Ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in Nation

For more than 65 years, community water fluoridation has been a safe and effective means for preventing tooth decay (cavities). While nearly all natural water sources contain some fluoride, most need to be adjusted so that optimal amounts are present. For every \$1 spent on water fluoridation it saves \$38 in dental treatment costs, positively impacting every member of a community regardless of age or income.

Since 2000, more than 1.8 million Nevada residents are receiving the health and economic benefits of water fluoridation, yet we can do better. With just 73.5% of the state's residents receiving fluoridated water, Nevada is ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

Learning about the benefits of fluoridation is key, yet many online resources with misinformation are available to confuse the average consumer. Oral Health Nevada and its partners support community water fluoridation for better dental health. Visit [www.oralhealthnevada.com](http://www.oralhealthnevada.com) for reliable and sound information about water fluoridation.

# WANTED!

**LOOKING FOR  
ORAL HEALTH  
CHAMPIONS**



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