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**ADHA
Fact Sheet****Oral Health Fast Facts
Add a Few to Your Next Health Story****Consumer Habits and Trends**

- Over 95 percent of U.S. adults who have been treated by a dental hygienist without a dentist on the premises say they felt comfortable with the care they received.
- About 78 percent of Americans have had at least one cavity by age 17. (1)
- Eighty percent of the U.S. population has some form of periodontal gum disease. (2)
- In 2007, Americans made about 500 million visits to dentists and spent an estimated \$98.6 billion on dental services. (3)

Links and Tips

- Dental hygienists screen for serious health problems, such as HIV infection, oral cancer, eating disorders, substance abuse and diabetes.
- Dental caries is the major cause of tooth loss in children; periodontal (gum) disease is the major cause of tooth loss in adults.
- Snacking on celery, carrots, or apples helps clear away loose food and debris.
- Toothbrushes should be replaced every two to three months and after illnesses like a cold or flu.
- Two out of three dental hygienists report that they see signs of hypertension and heart disease in some of their patients.
- Three out of four patients don't change their toothbrush as often as they should.
- Tongue and lip piercing can cause blood poisoning, prolonged or permanent drooling, damaged sense of taste, toxic shock syndrome, permanent damage to tooth enamel and oral tissue, and transmission of infections such as hepatitis B and HIV.
- Tobacco is the primary cause of oral cancers. Smoking a pack of cigarettes a day or using smokeless tobacco quadruples the risk of developing oral cancer. (4)
- Oral cancer occurs twice as frequently in men as women.(5)
- The biggest oral health problem for infants is early tooth decay, known as baby-bottle tooth decay. This results when babies routinely fall asleep with bottles filled with sugary liquids such as milk, formula and juice—anything other than plain water.
- Chewing gum can help eliminate food particles caught between teeth after a meal and also helps prevent plaque buildup by stimulating saliva production.
- Dental caries, popularly known as tooth decay, is an infectious, transmissible disease. (6) Research shows that the presence of bacterium known as streptococcus mutans leads to dental caries in children.

About Dental Hygienists

- There are more than 150,000 registered dental hygienists in the United States.
- About 98 percent of the nation's dental hygienists are female.
- There are 300 entry level, 60 degree completion and 18 master degree dental hygiene programs.
- Job prospects for dental hygienists are expected to remain excellent, and the employment rate is expected to grow 30 percent through 2016. (7)
- Dental hygienists who graduate from an accredited dental hygiene program receive an average of nearly 2,000 hours of classroom study in academic subjects emphasizing basic sciences, dental sciences, dental hygiene theory (including pain control, nutrition, oral health education, and preventive counseling), and periodontics (the study of gums and their supporting structures). These hours include at least 600 hours of supervised instruction in preclinical and clinical skills.
- While most dental hygienists work in private oral health practices, others provide services in hospitals; managed care organizations; federal, state, and municipal health departments; primary and secondary school systems; private businesses and industries; correctional institutions; and private and public centers for pediatric, geriatric, and other special needs groups.
- The "RDH" designation stands for Registered Dental Hygienist. It assures patients that a dental hygienist has completed a nationally accredited dental hygiene program, has successfully passed a national written and state clinical examination, and has received a state license to provide preventive oral health care services and patient education. (In Indiana, the designation LDH—Licensed Dental Hygienist—is used instead of RDH.) Make sure your preventive oral health care is being provided by a licensed dental hygienist.
- Restrictive supervising laws for dental hygienists make oral health care more difficult to find. Although laws that govern dental hygiene care differ from state to state, dental hygiene services are largely confined to private dental offices because of supervision laws, which require that dental hygienists practice under the supervision of a dentist.
- One state--Colorado--has independent practice laws that allow registered dental hygienists to practice without the supervision of a dentist in all settings. Only a few other states, including California and Washington, allow it in some situations.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Oral Health 2000: Facts and Figures. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/factsheets/sgr2000_fs1.htm. Accessed October 15, 2008.

2 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Periodontal (Gum) Disease: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Available at: <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/GumDiseases/PeriodontalGumDisease.htm>. Accessed January 7, 2009.

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Oral Health: Preventing Cavities, Gum Disease and Tooth Loss. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/aag/pdf/doh.pdf>. Accessed October 13, 2008.

4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fact Sheet: Key Findings from NHANES 1999-2002. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/factsheets/nhanes_findings.htm. Accessed October 15, 2008.

5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Oral Cancer: Deadly to Ignore. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/factsheets/oc_facts.htm. Accessed January 20, 2009.

6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Oral Health Surveillance. Glossary. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/NOHSS/GLMain.htm>. Accessed January 22, 2009.7 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook: Dental Hygienists. Available at: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos097.htm>. Accessed January 22, 2009.