

How Depression Is Linked to Oral Health

Eight Findings on the Growing Link Between Mental Health and Oral Health



Depression significantly affects an individual's emotional well-being and overall functioning. A growing body of research shows that our emotional state is connected to our oral health, too.

Here are some examples of the links between depression and oral health from the scientific literature:

Oral Hygiene



Results from the nationally representative *State of Oral Health Equity in America* survey show that, compared to adults without depression,

adults with severe depression are more than twice as likely to say they do not brush their teeth at least twice a day.

Even individuals with minimal depression are more likely to not brush their teeth at least twice a day than those without depression.

Adults with depression report brushing and flossing their teeth less often than those without depression.¹²



Dental Visits



Individuals with depression visit the dentist for care significantly less often than those without depression.¹³



Adults with poor mental health (including depression) are more likely to have one or more unmet oral health needs and are less likely to seek care for these needs than those with better mental health.⁴

Oral Health Problems



Depression is linked to **higher levels of dental caries (decay)**.⁵ Additionally, adults with depression **are more likely to have missing teeth** than adults without depression.⁶



Periodontal (gum) disease is associated with **higher scores on measures of depression**.⁷ Early evidence suggests that treatment for depression is **more effective in individuals with better periodontal health**.⁸

Pain and Pain Medication Use



Scores on measures of depression **are higher in individuals with a temporomandibular disorder (TMD)** — that is, chronic pain in the face and jaw — compared to those without a TMD.⁹



Young adults with a history of depression **are more likely to have extended use of opioid prescriptions after third molar (wisdom tooth) removal** than those without depression.¹⁰

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