

WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY

20 March 2026



Background

Oral health conditions (tooth decay, gum disease, tooth loss) are very common and largely preventable, yet they remain a major public health problem.

Around 3.7 billion people are affected worldwide. Untreated tooth decay is the most common condition (GBD 2021). Diseases linked to sugar consumption, tobacco, alcohol and poor oral hygiene.

National data

Prevalence: Dental caries: 29.9%, **Periodontal disease:** 39.2%

Factors: high sugar intake, alcohol, tobacco, poor oral hygiene, low awareness

- **Access to limited care:**
 - o 1 dentist for every 87,500 people (compared with the WHO standard 1 per 2,000)
- Inadequate facilities
- Lack of a structured national policy

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Trusted evidence.
Informed decisions.
Better health.

1. Fluoride toothpastes and the prevention of tooth decay

Key message

Fluoride toothpaste is essential for preventing tooth decay; opt for 1000–1500 ppm, but use with caution in children.

High level of evidence

- **Concept:**
 - Use of toothpastes containing different concentrations of fluoride to prevent tooth decay.
- **Details:**
 - Toothpastes containing 1000–1500 ppm (standard use)
 - Higher concentrations available
 - Use twice daily

- **Key principle:**
 - The higher the fluoride concentration, the greater the protection against tooth decay.

- **Results:**
 - Significant reduction in tooth decay among children, adolescents and adults
 - 1000–1500 ppm = proven efficacy
 - Higher concentrations = additional benefit
 - Risk of fluorosis in young children

- **Method:**
 - Review of randomised controlled trials assessing efficacy and tolerability.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD007868.pub3>

2. Antibiotics following a tooth extraction

Key message

Antibiotics can reduce the risk of infection following tooth extraction, particularly in the case of wisdom teeth. However, they do not alleviate pain or swelling and may cause side effects. Their use should be limited and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Moderate level of evidence

- **Concept:**
 - Comparison of the effectiveness of electric and manual toothbrushes.
- **Methods:**
 - Electric toothbrushes (rotating-oscillating)
 - Standard manual toothbrushes

- **Key principle:**
 - Better plaque removal helps prevent gum disease and tooth decay.

- **Results:**
 - Reduced risk of post-extraction infection
 - Reduced incidence of dry socket
 - No significant effect on pain, fever or swelling
 - Increased incidence of adverse effects
 - Limited data for at-risk populations
- **Adverse effects:**
 - o nausea, diarrhoea
- **Method:**
 - 23 randomised trials, >3,200 participants, predominantly healthy young adults.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD003811.pub3>

3. Electric toothbrushes vs manual toothbrushes

Key message

Electric toothbrushes are more effective than manual ones at reducing plaque and gingivitis. They offer better control over daily oral hygiene. Side effects are rare and generally mild.

Moderate level of evidence

- **Concept:**
 - Comparison of the effectiveness of electric and manual toothbrushes.
- **Methods:**
 - Electric toothbrushes (rotating-oscillating)
 - Standard manual toothbrushes

- **Key principle:**
 - Better plaque removal helps prevent gum disease and tooth decay.

- **Results:**
 - Reduction in plaque:
 - 11% at 1–3 months
 - 21% after more than 3 months
 - **Reduction in gingivitis:**
 - 6% in the short term
 - 11% in the long term
 - Oscillating-rotating toothbrushes are the most effective
- **Adverse effects** are rare, mild and transient
- **Method:**
 - 56 randomised trials, 5068 participants.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD002281.pub3>

4. Dental sealants for children

Key message

Dental sealants may help prevent tooth decay in young children. However, the current evidence is still insufficient and results vary. Further studies are needed to confirm their effectiveness.

Low level of evidence

- **Concept:**
 - Application of sealants to protect milk teeth from tooth decay.

- **Methods:**
 - Application to molars
 - Comparison with no sealant

- **Key principle:**
 - Dental sealants are a mechanical preventive strategy designed to reduce the risk of tooth decay in children. Their effectiveness depends on the quality of the application, follow-up and long-term maintenance.

- **Results:**
 - Results vary depending on the studies and types of sealants
 - Some studies suggest a protective effect, but this is not consistent
 - High heterogeneity (age, follow-up duration, techniques used)
 - Very few adverse effects reported
 - Insufficient data to confirm clear efficacy
- **Method:**
 - 9 studies, 1,120 children, high heterogeneity of results.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD012081.pub3>