Texas Oral Health Coalition

Oral Health is Overall Health

DATA BRIEF



Texas Oral Health Universe

Oral health and whole health are deeply connected, impacting everything from the ability to eat and speak, to academic success, job opportunities, and chronic disease prevention. When everyone has the opportunity to achieve their best oral health, we see healthier, stronger communities.

WHY ORAL HEALTH MATTERS

EDUCATION & SCHOOL SUCCESS

34 MILLION HOURS

of school instruction lost each year due to unplanned dental care.[1] Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic diseases among U.S. children.[1]

UNTREATED DENTAL DISEASE COSTS THE U.S. AN ESTIMATED

$45 BILLION

in lost productivity each year. Adults miss 243 million hours due to their own oral pain or unplanned dental visits, or those of people in their care.[2]

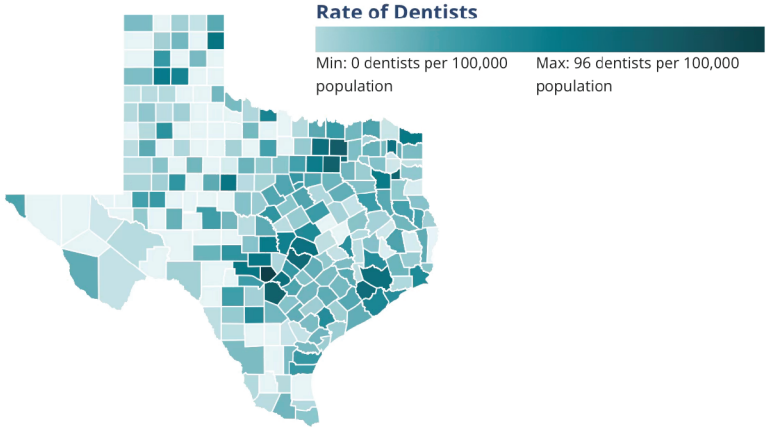
GATEWAY TO THE BODY

The latest research demonstrates a profound **bidirectional relationship between oral health and systemic chronic illness.**[3] Oral health drives whole health.

DOLLAR SENSE

Previous THI research estimated $3.58 in potential Medicaid cost savings for every $1 invested in a modeled preventive dental benefit for adults with disabilities.[4]

55 COUNTIES WITHOUT A DENTIST[5]



DENTAL PROVIDER SHORTAGES

83 counties in Texas have a county-wide shortage of dental health professionals; 75 of these are nonmetro counties.[6]

53.3 Dentists / 100,000 Texans – 6 Points Lower Than U.S. Average

NCHS 2024[7]

RURAL ACCESS CHALLENGES

Dental provider availability varies substantially across Texas, with rural communities particularly affected by geographic shortage areas. Previous research conducted by THI has also documented Texans traveling long distances to obtain dental care.[8] Provider availability and geography can shape access to oral health care.

Texas Medicaid covers comprehensive dental care for children; adult coverage is generally limited to emergency or medically necessary care.

Unlike pediatric dental coverage, adult dental coverage is not required as an essential health benefit.

Medicare generally does not cover routine dental care, although some Medicare Advantage plans offer dental benefits.

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ORAL HEALTH NEEDS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

EARLY AGE CHILDREN	MIDDLE AGE CHILDREN	WOMEN	ADULTS	OLDER ADULTS
with oral health problems*	with oral health problems*	with a dental visit in past 12 months	with a dental visit in past 12 months	with a dental visit in past 12 months
11.5% (2023-2024)[9] Texas Children Ages 1-5	**26.7%** (2023-2024)[9] Texas Children Ages 6-11	**56.8%** (2022)[10] Texas Women Ages 18-44	**58.1%** (2024)[11] Texas Adults	**66.1%** (2024)[12] Texas Adults Ages 65+
9.4% (2023-2024)[9] U.S. Children Ages 1-5	19.4% (2023-2024)[9] U.S. Children Ages 6-11	64.1% (2022)[10] U.S. Women Ages 18-44	67.5% (2024)[11] U.S. Adults	71.7% (2024)[12] U.S. Adults Ages 65+
▼ LAGGING	▼ LAGGING	▼ LAGGING	▼ LAGGING	▼ LAGGING

"Lagging" indicates that the Texas point estimate compares unfavorably with the U.S. point estimate shown.
*At least one oral health problem (cavity, bleeding gums, toothaches) within the past 12 months.

WHERE CAN TEXANS TURN FOR DENTAL CARE?

75 Charitable Clinics

(50% Offer Onsite Dental)

71 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)

4 Dental Schools

27 Dental Hygiene Programs

Community Dental Programs

School Based Programs

338 Freestanding Emergency Rooms

295 Hospital ERs

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