

PROTECTING SENIORS WITH PUBLICLY FUNDED ORAL HEALTH CARE

Professional oral care is, for the most part, privately funded and delivered in Canada. Statistics indicate, however, that Canadians between the ages of 60 and 79 are 40% less likely to have private dental insurance compared to the general population. In addition, living on a fixed income presents a set of financial challenges for seniors, and oral care is one service that seniors may delay or forego. Unfortunately, many untreated yet largely preventable oral diseases result in additional costs to Canada's health care system because of visits to emergency rooms for urgent dental care.

For the first time in Canadian history, people ages 65 and older outnumber those under 15 years of age. As the older adult segment of our society grows, so too will their health and oral health care needs. Numerous studies have identified significant oral health concerns, including high rates of periodontal disease (gum disease), root caries (cavities), and poorly fitting dentures, among seniors. It is also well established that overall health and well-being can be affected considerably by the quality of one's oral health.

Canada's health system must adapt to the evolving needs of our aging population.

The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) believes that all Canadians, including seniors, must have access to oral health care. CDHA recommends that all levels of government take action to implement:

PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS IN ALL JURISDICTIONS TO ENSURE THAT SENIORS HAVE ACCESS TO NECESSARY PREVENTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC ORAL HEALTH SERVICES.

Dental hygienists are primary care providers who can play a key role in the delivery of preventive and therapeutic oral health care services.



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