

National standards for long-term care: addressing oral health for overall health

Oral health is vital for overall health and wellbeing.

Poor oral health status in people living in long-term care homes is multifactorial in nature. It seldom results from a single underlying condition or cause, but rather from a combination of contributing and predisposing factors.

As essential primary healthcare professionals, dental hygienists working in long-term care homes across Canada identify many oral health issues and concerns that are not seen by other health professionals. It is more important than ever to accelerate strong, consistent, and tangible progress in meeting the oral health needs of Canada's aging population and the more than 400,000 residents in long-term care homes across the country. Improved oral health will support overall health and wellness in person-centered and evidence-informed ways.

CDHA's recommendations for addressing oral health within national standards for long-term care services across Canada are centered around five concepts. Most of these should be driven by collaboration between all jurisdictions and tied to new targeted federal funding and accountability systems.

Care teams with dental hygienists

Professional staffing and interprofessional collaboration in long-term care homes should incorporate dental hygienists to ensure a comprehensive program of oral health services to meet the oral health needs of residents.

Oral health services for residents

Oral health care services for long-term care home residents must include oral health screenings and assessments, and the development of personalized oral health care plans, and the implementation of daily mouth care – by dental hygienists.

Oral health education and training for staff

All direct-care workers in long-term care homes should receive education on oral health. This education should be developed and delivered by dental hygienists.

Oral health in legislation pertaining to long-term care homes

Legislation pertaining to long-term care homes across the country must reflect minimum standards for oral health care and related aspects.

Oral health in accreditation standards for long-term care homes

Accreditation standards specific to oral health services in long-term care settings should be developed and implemented.

For any questions or comments

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