



THE CANADIAN DENTAL
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

A National Oral Health Care Plan for Canadian Seniors



Canadians without private insurance coverage or access to publicly funded dental programs (where available) are largely left to pay out-of-pocket for visits to an oral health professional. For many vulnerable seniors in particular, affordability is a major barrier preventing them from obtaining the oral health care services they need.

Without appropriate and regular oral health care, high-risk populations in Canada become more vulnerable to oral diseases and conditions. Those with oral pain, discomfort, difficulties chewing or swallowing often have no recourse but to visit doctors' offices and hospital emergency departments. In terms of the overall burden of illness, oral diseases are associated with serious, systemic conditions such as diabetes, respiratory, and cardiovascular diseases.

Pre-pandemic results from public opinion polling conducted for the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association found that:

- 4 in 10 Canadians do not have dental benefits. Those without coverage are most likely to be the elderly, have a lower income, or live in a rural area, Atlantic Canada or Quebec.
- 56% of Canadians over age 60 have no dental benefits coverage.

In December 2019, the federal government made a commitment to study universal dental care for all Canadians. Given that seniors have been particularly hard hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is strongly recommended that the government move to create publicly funded access to oral hygiene services for this vulnerable population.

As experts in preventive oral health care, dental hygienists understand the critical need to make meaningful investments in oral health for priority populations who currently lack access to dental insurance or publicly funded programs. The time to invest is now.

WHAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN DO

Work with provinces and territories to ensure that Canadian seniors living in long-term care residences or at home have access to preventive and basic oral health care services.

Invest \$2 billion over five years to help provinces and territories develop and expand oral health programs for vulnerable seniors.

Learn more: cdha.ca/oralhealthforseniors

