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FDI POLICY STATEMENT
Lifelong Oral Health
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3 **CONTEXT**

4 Lifelong oral health, encompassing functional, psychosocial, and structural integrity of
5 the mouth and teeth, is fundamental to maintaining and improving the quality of life,
6 overall health, well-being, and full participation in society throughout an individual's
7 lifespan^{1,2}. Globalization, urbanization, evolving social norms, and technological
8 advancements are shaping health behaviours and influencing the prevalence and
9 management of oral and general health conditions³. Public health responses should
10 take these emerging challenges into account via policies that promote lifelong oral
11 health centred on individuals, their families, their communities, and its integration
12 within overall health⁴.

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14 **SCOPE**

15 Oral health should be embedded within comprehensive healthy-life strategies as an
16 essential determinant of quality of life. Implementation requires adaptable health
17 systems, integrated long-term care structures, and coordinated action among
18 stakeholders across sectors and government levels to ensure accessible, affordable,
19 equitable, inclusive, culturally responsive, and sustainable healthcare for
20 all^{4,5}. Implementation should also prioritize efforts to reduce oral health inequities
21 among underserved and vulnerable populations.

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23 **DEFINITION**

24 Lifelong oral health aims to maintain good oral health and optimal quality of life through
25 health promotion, risk assessment, disease prevention, early diagnosis, and
26 intervention at all stages of life. The goal of reaching advanced age with a functional
27 dentition is feasible if preventive measures and oral healthcare are accessible
28 throughout life, supported by sustainable and adequately funded healthcare systems
29 that enable timely access to evidence-based oral healthcare.

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31 **PRINCIPLES**

This policy statement calls for the integration of oral health into general health and the promotion of a sustainable and universal health-coverage system at each stage of life. This approach emphasizes disease prevention and improving access to equitable health care, contributing to greater well-being for all.

POLICY

FDI advocates educating, promoting, and raising awareness of oral health and its impact on general health and well-being throughout life⁴⁻⁶. FDI also supports political, legislative, and decision-making processes that enhance oral health promotion and care⁷. The risk of developing caries, periodontal disease, or oral cancer in adulthood is influenced not only by prevailing risk factors, but also by exposures during the prenatal period, childhood, and adolescence^{8, 9}.

Governments, non-governmental organizations, National Dental Associations, communities, and individuals should therefore create supportive environments, supported by adequate resources and sustainable financing¹⁰, for advancing oral health and well-being at all stages of life, via:

- **Public policies:** Considering oral health in all public policies— including healthy nutrition, housing, education, oral hygiene instruction, health literacy promotion, water supply, tobacco control, sugar intake reduction, social protection, healthy ageing policies and mental health.
- **Disease prevention:** Strengthening the prevention of non-communicable diseases by integrating oral health promotion into general health initiatives and addressing shared risk factors such as tobacco use, inadequate dietary behaviors, and harmful alcohol consumption.
- **Community settings:** Promoting lifelong prevention in key community settings such as public health centers, schools, workplaces, long-term care facilities, particularly those that support vulnerable populations.
- **Accessibility:** Urging governments, national and regional insurance providers and non-governmental funders to support efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage by regular and affordable access to healthcare for people of all ages.
- **Special needs healthcare:** Supporting people with special healthcare needs by preserving or enhancing their oral function through training professional and family caregivers responsible for daily oral hygiene, and promoting appropriate recognition and management of oral functional needs by oral health professionals.
- **Primary oral healthcare:** Ensuring that essential oral health services are integrated within primary health care systems through innovative approaches including teledentistry, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and prevention-oriented approaches adapted to national contexts.
- **Dentist and dental team leadership:** Recognizing and strengthening the leadership role of dentists and the dental team in advocating for oral health, delivering preventive and therapeutic care, and contributing to health system planning and policy development. Promoting interprofessional collaboration between dental and non-dental healthcare professionals. This includes supporting a sustainable oral health workforce through education, training, professional development, and workforce planning to meet the evolving needs of populations across an individual's lifespan.

KEYWORDS

Lifelong oral health, quality of life, health promotion, primary health care.

DISCLAIMER

The information in this Policy Statement was based on the best scientific evidence available at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities, socio-economic realities, and evolving international public health strategies.

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