

Oral health and noncommunicable diseases – how the two are linked

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During the recent WHO General Assembly, a landmark resolution on oral health calling for a global strategy, action plan, targets for 2030 and best buys for oral health received unanimous support. In this context, and with the upcoming Global Strategy 2022 on oral disease control, the FDI World Dental Federation and the NCD Alliance joined forces to develop a briefing note for policy makers.

The briefing note, entitled "[Why and How to integrate oral health into the NCD and UHC responses \[1\]](#)" is structured around five key evidence-based messages on the associations between oral health and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the role of oral health care in health systems. It also provides solutions for implementing such strategies and calls to action for each key message.

Five key messages to motivate action

1. **Oral health is a key indicator of general health**, well-being, and quality of life, which is why oral diseases should be prioritized as part of the NCD and UHC responses. This can be supported by strong oral health information systems.
2. **Oral diseases and other NCDs share modifiable risk factors**, and joint prevention is possible through a multisectoral response and existing cost-effective solutions.
3. **Poor oral health is a risk factor for NCDs**, and thus health systems can be optimized and strengthened by integrating oral health promotion and oral healthcare services for all.
4. **Good oral health can positively impact NCD treatment outcomes** so there is a need to invest in more multidisciplinary research and interprofessional collaboration across care teams.
5. **Engaging people living with oral diseases, communities, and health professionals is crucial** to successfully integrate oral health into the NCD and UHC responses.

In August 2021, the World Health Organization prepared the draft Global Strategy on tackling oral diseases to support the implementation of the resolution on oral health. This draft links oral health and NCDs by recognising the common risk factors for oral diseases and other NCDs but the associations between oral health, NCDs and general health go beyond the sharing of risk factors, as highlighted in the key messages of the briefing note.

This briefing note supports policy makers in the development of a coherent and robust *Global strategy on tackling oral diseases* and *2023 Action plan for public oral health*, comprehensively encompassing all the implications of the associations between oral and general health.

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