

Good dental care is essential for achieving a healthy Ohio. We all need to take our oral health a lot more seriously. Poor oral health increases our risk of stroke, heart disease—including fatal heart attacks—and diabetes. It can lead to respiratory infections and pneumonia, bone mass loss in older women, and premature births.

Yet, dental care is out of reach for too many Ohioans because we cannot afford it or there are not enough dentists where we live. In fact, for children and low-income adults it is the number one unmet health need. Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease—more common than asthma.

Because the reasons for lack of dental care are many so are the solutions to increasing access to care. There are many ongoing efforts to increase access to dental sealants for Ohio's children, to educate parents and adults about the importance of dental care, and to increase public awareness of our dental health crisis. Other approaches include continued incentives for dentists to practice in underserved areas and expanding the dental team to include specially trained mid-level providers, similar to nurse practitioners.



UHCAN Ohio is a statewide nonprofit organization working for high quality, accessible, affordable health care for all Ohioans. UHCAN Ohio does not support or oppose candidates for political office. Dental Access Now! is a project working to expand access to dental care and seeking to engage all stakeholders including consumers, providers, and policymakers in a process to build consensus on solutions to this issue.

Dental Access Now!
Bringing quality dental care to every community •

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About 45 percent of adults in Ohio have one or more permanent teeth removed due to tooth decay or gum disease. More than half of Ohio's children experience dental decay by the third grade. Dental Care is the number one unmet health need for children and low income adults.

Q: What will you do to ensure that more Ohioans get the dental care that they need?

Cost is one reason many Ohioans do not get dental care. 45 percent of Ohio adults do not have dental insurance. 60 percent of seniors have no dental insurance and most Medicare does not cover routine dental care. 19 percent of children do not have dental insurance. Unfortunately for adults, dental coverage is not part of the essential benefits package under health care reform.

Q: What will you do to make sure Ohioans have affordable dental insurance options as the Affordable Care Act is implemented in Ohio?

In Ohio, where you live may decrease your odds of getting dental care. Ohio has 73 geographic areas and communities with severe shortages of dentists to serve the population that lives there. Nearly 1.3 million Ohioans live in these shortage areas. Some experts say that a workable ratio is one dentist for 3,000 people. Some of Ohio's shortage areas have ratios five times higher or more than that number.

Q: Would you support the addition of a mid-level provider—like a nurse practitioner—to the dental team to increase access to preventive care and routine dental services in communities where there are not enough dentists?

