

Indian Health Diabetes Best Practices —



Oral Health

Indian Health Service Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention
5300 Homestead Road NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110
(505) 248-4182 www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/diabetes



Is a Best Practice Oral Health Program right for your diabetes program?

➔ Do you want your diabetes program to be better at:

1. Raising awareness about the importance of oral health?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Conducting community campaigns ♦ Distributing newsletters and other materials ♦ Making community presentations about the importance of oral health

Who will be doing it: Community program staff ♦ Health care providers ♦ Organization leaders

2. Conducting annual dental exams?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Conducting dental exams annually in all patients with diabetes ♦ Conducting dental cleaning at least annually in all patients with diabetes

Who will be doing it: Health care providers

3. Prioritizing treatment?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Prioritizing dental care using the following system: (1) emergency care (trauma, acute pain, and infections); (2) control of caries and eminent pulpal involvement; (3) initial periodontal therapy (full mouth treatment); (4) restorative treatment; (5) elective surgical treatment; (6) prosthetics; (7) other higher levels of care; and (8) recall (follow-up)

Who will be doing it: Health care providers

4. Providing periodontal treatment?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Using a combination of non-surgical (ultrasonic) instrumentation with a systemic antibiotic and anti-infective agent irrigation ♦ Conducting two half-mouth treatment sessions ♦ Recalling all patients at six months following their initial periodontal treatment to maintain the patient's periodontal health

Who will be doing it: Health care providers

5. Providing education?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Providing training and continuing education to health care providers, dental staff, and field workers ♦ Offering dental health care education to patients annually ♦ Reinforcing education during follow-up visits ♦ Establishing an oral health care team that meets regularly to plan program activities

Who will be doing it: Community program staff ♦ Health care providers

➔ If you answered "Yes" to many of these questions, go to page 2 to learn how a Best Practice Oral Health Program can benefit your diabetes program!

What is oral health?

People with diabetes can have special issues with their teeth and gums, especially if their blood sugar is high. Oral health programs can help people with diabetes by providing routine and preventive dental care and by conducting clinical dental assessments. A program that focuses on oral health is an essential element of a diabetes program.

Why is oral health important to American Indian and Alaska Native communities?

- Among American Indians and Alaska Natives with diabetes, advanced periodontal disease occurs at rates two to three times higher than for individuals who do not have diabetes.
- Infections associated with advanced periodontal disease can interfere with an individual's blood sugar control and can actually cause blood sugar levels to rise.
- Periodontal disease can result in the loss of all teeth in approximately one third of American Indians and Alaska Natives with diabetes. People without teeth can suffer not only emotionally, but also nutritionally because they may not have the ability to eat many types of important foods.

The good news about oral health...

Regular dental exams provide opportunities for prevention, early detection, and treatment of periodontal disease. Regular dental cleaning has been shown to improve blood sugar control in patients with poorly controlled diabetes.



"I teach people that the state of their diabetes affects their oral health, and the state of their oral health affects their diabetes. People become more motivated to take care of their teeth when they realize it is all connected."

—Rhonda Plake, Dental Hygienist (not pictured above)
Pawnee Indian Health Center Dental Clinic

A Best Practice Oral Health Program will require a coordinated approach. Here are some tips on how health care providers, community programs, health care administrators, and tribal leadership can work together.

➔ Working together to improve oral health:

1. Who can help?

Ask for and enlist support from: Dentists, dental hygienists, and health care providers with an interest and expertise in oral health ♦ Community programs

2. Why is it important to work together?

Working with clinic, community, and leadership partners will help you: Leverage resources ♦ Avoid duplicating services ♦ Share staff, ideas, and resources ♦ Get support for your common goal of improving the health of your community

3. How can you work together?

Work with your partners to: Share what you are doing ♦ Determine what each partner will do ♦ Assign tasks and timelines ♦ Plan and establish programs and activities ♦ Develop and implement goals and objectives ♦ Design evaluation plans ♦ Maintain regular contact with each other

