

Closing the knowledge gap: dispelling myths about oral health

Quick facts on oral health awareness

From an early age, patients are taught that brushing and flossing are essential to maintaining oral health. Yet new research from Humana shows that gaps remain in patients' understanding of how oral health is influenced by factors such as stress, how preventive tools such as fluoride work and how oral health connects to overall health. Below are some of the myths that many patients hold on to.

Myth: Stress and mental health have no effect on oral health

Fact: Chronic stress can influence oral health in both direct and indirect ways, from physical symptoms such as teeth grinding, to changes in daily dental health hygiene changes (e.g., missed brushings and flossing).

21% of dental insurance decision-makers believe stress has no impact on oral health¹

Myth: Fluoride hasn't been proven to help prevent tooth decay

Fact: Fluoride plays a well-established role in protecting teeth and reducing the risk of cavities, so it's critical for providers to deliver clear education that proves how important it is.

More than 30% of respondents reported they did not recognize fluoride's protective role¹

Myth: Oral health is separate from overall health

Fact: Oral health is closely linked to broader health outcomes, and poor dental health is clearly linked to heart disease, stroke, diabetes complications, respiratory infections and even dementia. The better patients understand the risks, the more likely they will be open to early intervention and ongoing care.

1 in 5 respondents say they did not recognize that oral health is linked to overall health¹

Myth: Preventive dental care is always covered by insurance

Fact: Preventive care is often assumed to be standard, but coverage can vary by plan.

20% of United States adults report preventive services such as cleanings are not covered by their dental plan¹

While awareness of oral health is relatively high, there are still significant gaps in understanding that persist. For providers, these findings show that there's an important opportunity to provide clear and consistent patient education.



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Source:

1. "Humana Dental Insurance," Opinion Research, July 2025.

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Myth	Fact	
Stress and mental health have no effect on oral health.	Chronic stress can influence oral health in both direct and indirect ways, from physical symptoms such as teeth grinding, to changes in daily dental health hygiene changes (e.g., missed brushings and flossing).	21% of dental insurance decision-makers believe stress has no impact on oral health ¹
Flouride hasn't been proven to help tooth decay.	Fluoride plays a well-established role in protecting teeth and reducing the risk of cavities, so it's critical for providers to deliver clear education that proves how important it is.	more than 30% of respondents reported they did not recognize fluoride's protective role ¹
Preventive dental care is always covered by insurance.	Preventive care is often assumed to be standard, but coverage can vary by plan.	20% of United States adults report preventive services such as cleanings are not covered by their dental plan ¹
Oral health is separate from overall health.	Oral health is closely linked to broader health outcomes, and poor dental health is clearly linked to heart disease, stroke, diabetes complications, respiratory infections and even dementia. The better patients understand the risks, the more likely they will be open to early intervention and ongoing care.	1 in 5 respondents say they did not recognize that oral health is linked to overall health ¹



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1. "Humana Dental Insurance," Opinium Research, July 2025.

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