



SADA
THE SOUTH AFRICAN
DENTAL ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE

TITLE:

Millions of people suffering from oral disease across South Africa

STATEMENT:

This World Oral Health Day, SADA emphasizes the need for good oral health for our physical, emotional, social and mental well-being.

GAUTENG – 17 March 2022

Millions of people suffering from oral disease across South Africa

FDI World Dental Federation calls for urgent action against oral disease on World Oral Health Day, as data shows 3.5 billion people affected globally

Monday 20 March 2023 (Johannesburg, South Africa) – South Africa is facing an oral health crisis, with millions of people suffering from tooth decay, severe gum disease, tooth loss, and oral cancer, according to an [inaugural report on the global oral disease burden](#) from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Good oral health is central to breathing, eating, and speaking, and contributes to a person's overall physical and mental well-being. When an oral disease is left untreated, it can severely impact a person's health and social prospects. Sufferers are at risk of continued pain and the development of secondary diseases, social isolation, exclusion from the workforce, and reduced educational performance.

In South Africa, 41% of children aged 1-9 years and close to 28% of people aged 5 years and over experienced untreated tooth decay in deciduous and permanent teeth respectively, while nearly 25% of people aged 15 years and over experienced severe periodontal disease in 2019. The country saw 1,933 new cases of lip and oral cavity cancer in 2020.

“Oral diseases are among the biggest challenges in global health today and mainly impact the most disadvantaged people in society,” said Dr Khanyi Makwakwa, South African Dental Association's FDI National Liaison Officer. “When people have access to prevention and treatment for oral diseases, it can unlock enormous health and economic benefits for their lives and society more broadly. This [World Oral Health Day](#), it is vital that governments take the action needed to ensure everyone has access to the oral health care they need.”

Oral diseases affect 3.5 billion people globally, equating to roughly 1 billion more cases than all five major non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, cancers, and mental disorders) put together. Around 75% of people suffering from oral diseases live in low- and middle-income countries.

Despite most oral diseases being preventable and treatable with cost-effective interventions, few people globally are able to access oral health services for myriad reasons, including cost and the availability of trained professionals. In South Africa, there were 1.1 dentists per 10,000 people in 2019, below the global average of 3.28 per 10,000.

This year, the 76th session of the World Health Assembly WHO will adopt the Global Oral Health Action Plan (2023-2030), which calls on governments to ensure that “80% of the global population is entitled to essential oral health care services.” This would be achieved through, among other measures, countries prioritizing the integration of oral health into their national health services and ensuring there are enough trained dental health professionals.

The Plan aligns with FDI’s Vision 2030: Delivering Optimal Oral Health For All and will be integral to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) for oral health by 2030. Countries and stakeholders will convene at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on UHC in September this year to discuss how to reinvigorate the process toward achieving health for all.

Dr Khanyi Makwakwa said, “The upcoming high-level meeting on UHC is a tremendous opportunity for the world to take concerted action on oral health. It is critical that tackling oral diseases be central to any action plan that aims to deliver health for everyone.”

For more information or to find a dentist in your area, go to <https://www.sada.co.za/>

Ends

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About SADA:

The South African Dental Association (SADA) is the peak national body for the dental profession in South Africa representing the large majority of active registered dentists, both in the public and private sectors in South Africa. It is a non-profit professional association with voluntary membership organisation represented by a total of 11 branches, one in every province of the Republic of South Africa, with Gauteng and Eastern Cape provinces having two branches each. The Association represents the interests of both the oral health profession and its members in South Africa.

The Association is committed and engaged in processes relating to setting industry standards and formulating policies. Learn more about SADA at <https://www.sada.co.za>

About FDI World Dental Federation

FDI World Dental Federation serves as the principal representative body for over 1 million dentists worldwide. Its membership includes some 200 national dental associations and specialist groups in over 130 countries. FDI has the vision of leading the world to optimal oral health.

About World Oral Health Day

World Oral Health Day is an initiative of FDI World Dental Federation that is celebrated on 20 March every year and aims to empower people with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to secure good oral health.

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Facebook Page (Professional): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sadentalassociation/>

Facebook – (YDC): <https://www.facebook.com/youngdentistscouncil/>

Instagram (Public): <https://www.instagram.com/southafricandentalassociation/>

Twitter (Public): <https://twitter.com/SADentalAssoc>

YouTube (Public): <http://www.youtube.com/c/SouthAfricanDentalAssociation>

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