

**HALEON**

# **Improving global oral health**

Our Haleon position



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## **Background**

According to the International Dental Federation (FDI), oral health is multi-faceted and “includes the ability to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow and convey a range of emotions through facial expressions with confidence and without pain, discomfort, and disease of the craniofacial complex [head, face, and oral cavity]”.<sup>i</sup> From this, we can see that oral health problems can take away from our comfort, impact on our enjoyment of life and affect our wider health.

Yet, while oral health problems are considered to be largely preventable through effective oral hygiene, their prevalence remains high.

- An estimated **3.5 billion** people globally experience oral disease with around **2.5 billion** cases of caries (tooth decay) and **1 billion** cases of severe periodontitis (infections and inflammation of the gums and bone around the teeth).<sup>ii</sup>
- In their lifetime **1 in 5** people will suffer from tooth loss,<sup>iii</sup> **1 in 3** will experience tooth sensitivity,<sup>iv</sup> and **1 in 3** will spit blood when they brush their teeth.<sup>v</sup>

The economic burden of poor oral health and oral disease accounts for approximately **\$544 billion** in direct and indirect costs, making oral health conditions some of the most expensive elements of healthcare.<sup>vi vii</sup>

Oral diseases – such as periodontitis - also have wider health implications. Periodontitis has been linked with more than 57 systemic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including diabetes and cardiovascular disease.<sup>viii</sup> There is emerging evidence that periodontal disease is a contributing factor in a complex multi-factor process leading to other NCDs, and complications of those diseases, in certain people. For people with type 2 diabetes, having periodontitis is associated with poorer blood sugar control and more significant complications. The worse their blood sugar control, the worse their periodontitis and vice versa - and successfully treating periodontitis improves diabetes control to the same extent as certain drugs used to treat diabetes.<sup>ix</sup> Research in people with chronic kidney disease has also demonstrated a bidirectional causal link between periodontitis and chronic kidney disease.<sup>xi</sup>

## **Barriers**

Despite the significant impact of oral health problems on people's everyday health, barriers to improvement persist.

### **1. Oral health inclusivity**

There are substantial inequities in the prevalence and experience of oral health, with a significant proportion of people not adequately supported to achieve good oral health.<sup>xii</sup> In disadvantaged populations and underserved communities, oral disease risk is elevated.<sup>xiii</sup> For example, older adults in underserved communities are more likely to experience periodontal diseases, oral cancers, and tooth loss.<sup>xiv</sup>

To address this, Haleon has supported Economist Impact to create the world's first **Health Inclusivity Index**, designed to highlight the state of health inclusivity around the world and how it can be improved. Haleon is also the corporate sponsor of an upcoming European Federation of Periodontology and Economist Impact research white paper, aiming to raise awareness around inequalities in oral health and gaps in dental care, and the economic arguments for public sector investment to address them.

*For more information, please see our position on **Health inclusivity and self-care**.*

### **2. A lack of oral health self-care**

When performed effectively, twice daily tooth brushing with toothpastes containing fluoride (1,000 and 1,500 ppm) effectively prevents plaque build-up, periodontal diseases, and tooth decay.<sup>xv</sup> Innovative toothpaste formulations can also contain many ingredients to target different diseases and conditions, such as sensitivity, as well as delivering cosmetic benefits. Yet, globally only about 66% of over 18s seem to brush their teeth at least twice a day.<sup>xvi</sup>

To address this, Haleon is seeking new ways to improve oral health habits around the world and build awareness of oral health conditions, including working in partnership with academics, NGOs, non-profits and other dental healthcare experts to deliver and advocate for better everyday oral health.

We have partnered with **Smile Train since 2018**, a world-leading cleft charity that empowers local Healthcare Professionals (HCPs) to provide free, life-changing surgery and comprehensive cleft care to children with cleft lip and palate in more than 90 countries. Through our partnership, Smile Train has been able to train over 8,800 HCPs, delivered 13,500 life-changing surgeries, and supported over 38,000 families.

### **3. Connecting the mouth and the body**

The health of the mouth and the body have traditionally been treated separately, largely due to separate training pathways, regulations, oversight bodies, and remuneration. However, as the connection between oral and systemic health becomes clearer, it also becomes increasingly important to connect the treatment of individuals within a health system by physically co-locating oral health as part of primary care services, connecting them through technology, measurement, and data, or as part of health service commissioning.

To address this, Haleon collaborates with academic institutions to support the evolution of oral health science through funding research at PhD and Post-doctoral level as well as Research prizes.

Now approaching its 20<sup>th</sup> year, the **International Association for Dental Research (IADR) Innovation in Oral Care Award**, supported by Haleon, is a prestigious and highly respected global research prize competition offering opportunities for investigators to conduct dental research that will have a direct impact on the oral health of the public. Three \$50,000 prizes are awarded annually by the IADR scientific committee for the winning research submission.

### **4. Public awareness and oral health literacy**

The prevalence of the most common oral health conditions has not changed since the 1990s, at around 45%.<sup>xvii</sup> In order to improve individual and population oral health, there is a need to drive awareness, education, and understanding of the impact of poor oral health including its link to systemic health, and to improve oral health literacy.<sup>xviii</sup>

To address this, Haleon supports dental practitioners by developing tools and services that can help them tackle everyday challenges.

Our work with **FDI** is a central part of our work on oral health. We are a **corporate partner** for FDI's **Vision 2030** programme, which aims to raise awareness around the opportunities to improve oral health, reduce oral health inequalities, and contribute to reducing the global burden of oral diseases. We also support FDI to provide tools and training on specific oral health needs or topics such as **Oral Health in Comprehensive Cleft Care**, **Partially Dentate Patients**, and Toothbrushing Guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

Guidance on proper denture hygiene varies within and between countries. For example, research shows that people with dentures use various ways to clean them, depending on personal experience. So, we worked with the Oral Health Foundation to produce the first global **Denture Care Guidelines**. These bring together existing recommendations to create a consensus-driven, evidence-based approach to give patients, oral healthcare professionals, and caregivers guidance on optimal denture care.

## Haleon's commitment to sustainable oral health

In addition to our work addressing barriers to better oral health, we are also committed to evolving our science and manufacturing processes to continue to deliver world leading products while also helping to address the needs of the planet.

We are committed to making everyday oral health practices more sustainable. We are currently conducting a study to understand the barriers to more sustainable behaviours in the bathroom and how we can support sustainable change. For example, we know that less than 50% of bathroom waste is currently recycled. So, **in 2021 we committed to make 1 billion of our toothpaste tubes recycle ready by 2025. So far, we have delivered over 350 million of them. Please find out more [here](#).**

In 2021, we found an innovative way to leverage renewable raw materials for high-performance oral care products - helping reduce the use of fossil fuels for virgin plastic. We are piloting this with our *Dr.BEST GreenClean* toothbrush, which builds new sustainable handle technology into its previous innovations with sustainable bristles and packaging. *For more information see our position on **[Sustainable Packaging](#)**.*

<sup>1</sup> Our other work with FDI also includes supporting **World Oral Health Day**, **Sustainability in Dentistry** and the **Oral Health Observatory**.

We have made significant investments in solar energy production at our Oak Hill manufacturing site in New York, where we manufacture oral health products for the US and Canada. Since the end of 2021, 70% of the site's power consumption has come from solar energy. *Please find out more [here](#).*

*Please find out more about our sustainability commitments [here](#).*

## **Policy recommendations**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised the importance of good oral health, as part of overall health, and adopted an **Oral Health Resolution** in 2021. We welcome the progress this represents, including the recognition of the important role of oral health in self-care, and the inclusion of fluoride toothpaste in the WHO's **Model List of Essential Medicines**.

We believe that governments, policymakers, health systems, regulators, industry, trade associations, HCPs, and citizens should work together to:

- Increase the access and availability of oral health self-care products that enable people to target specific oral health problems, supporting their everyday oral health.
- Incorporate oral health into full body health, including recognising the links between oral and systemic health, and integrating oral healthcare into primary care teams, national health infrastructure, measurement and data systems, and financing models.
- Improve oral health inclusivity, targeting vulnerable and underserved populations.
- Increase public health activities related to oral health literacy and the prevention of oral disease.
- Adopt sustainable oral health and dentistry practices, in line with the **FDI consensus statement** on sustainable oral health.

*For more information on how we engage policymakers, please see our **position on political advocacy**.*

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- <sup>ii</sup> WHO, *Global oral health status report: towards universal health coverage for oral health by 2030*, (2022). [<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240061484>] [last accessed Nov 2022].
- <sup>iii</sup> NHS England, *Executive summary: Adult Dental Health Survey* (2009) [<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-dental-health-survey/adult-dental-health-survey-2009-summary-report-and-thematic-series>] [last accessed June 2022].
- <sup>iv</sup> Addy, M., *Dentine hypersensitivity: new perspectives on an old problem*, *International Dental Journal*, 52(S5P2), (2002) pp. 367-375.
- <sup>v</sup> GSK data on file – Usage and Attitudes Study. Parodontax and Sensodyne. Netherlands 2010.
- <sup>vi</sup> Righolt AJ. Et al. *J Dent Res. Global-, Regional-, and Country-Level Economic Impacts of Dental Diseases in 2015*, 97(5):501–7. (2017) [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29342371/>] [last accessed May 2022];
- <sup>vii</sup> WHO, *Oral Health*, WHA74.5 (2021) [[https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA74/A74\\_R5-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74_R5-en.pdf)] [last accessed May 2022].
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- <sup>x</sup> D’Aiuto, F. et al. *Systemic effects of periodontitis treatment in patients with type 2 diabetes: a 12 month, single-centre, investigator-masked, randomised trial*, *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol.* 6, 954–965 (2018). [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30472992/>] [last accessed May 2022].
- <sup>xi</sup> Sharma, P. et al. *Oxidative stress links periodontal inflammation and renal function*, *J. Clin. Periodontol.* 48, 357–367 (2021). [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33368493/>] [last accessed May 2022].
- <sup>xii</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit. *Report: Time to take gum disease seriously: The societal and economic impact of periodontitis*, *The Economist* (2021). [[eiu-efp-oralb-gum-disease.pdf \(economist.com\)](https://www.eiu.com/en/analysis/industry/healthcare/periodontitis)] [last accessed May 2022].
- <sup>xiii</sup> Northridge M. et al., *Disparities in Access to Oral Health Care*, *Annual Review of Public Health*, 41:513-535 (2020) [[www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040119-094318](https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040119-094318)] [last accessed May 2022].
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