

# Good oral care for governments

Oral diseases, such as tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer, are widespread and largely preventable. Through individual action combined with government-driven, population-based strategies, good oral health and general health can be secured.

## Does your government take enough action on oral health?

Tick the items that apply to your government in the checklist below and use the accompanying tips to see where policy improvements can still be made to help your citizens

**ACT ON MOUTH HEALTH.**

### Does your government celebrate World Oral Health Day?

Leverage World Oral Health Day (WOHD) as a platform for your government to launch policies that address oral diseases at the local, national and regional level. Reach out to your country's National Dental Association to help support your WOHD activities. Learn more at [www.worldoralhealthday.org](http://www.worldoralhealthday.org).

### Does your country monitor its burden of oral disease?

To determine and monitor your country's burden of oral disease, your government can systematically include oral disease surveillance, which encompasses oral health risk factors, in epidemiological monitoring. Your country can also integrate oral disease surveillance into existing noncommunicable disease (NCD) monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Collected data should then be compiled in repositories and made universally accessible for research and to policymakers.

### Does your country have a national oral health plan?

Implementing a national oral health plan is crucial for reducing your country's burden of oral disease. A national oral health plan should include your country's oral disease burden, address risk factors, and the resources available to implement the plan in the context of the culture and healthcare system in your country. If your national oral health plan is to succeed, it also requires a budget with funding.

### Does your country integrate oral health into noncommunicable disease prevention and control?

Implementing a national NCD plan that integrates oral health perspectives will help tackle cross-cutting issues, improve collaboration between oral disease and other NCD groups, strengthen health systems and ultimately help reduce the burden of oral disease and other NCDs. Your government can also integrate oral health into national strategies for NCD risk factors such as sugar, tobacco and alcohol.

### Does your country tax sugar-rich foods or sugar-sweetened beverages?

Your government can apply different types of taxes on sugar-rich foods and sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB), including: excise taxes (both specific and ad valorem), customs duties, value added taxes, general sales or consumption taxes, and special levies. Use Articles 6 and 7 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control as a model for your country's sugar taxation measures.



**Does your country implement interventions to reduce the intake of sugar among children?**

Promote the World Health Organization's recommendation of approximately 3 teaspoons per day for children (this excludes sugars naturally present in whole fruits and milk). To encourage this recommendation, your government can work together with schools to implement 'water-only' policies for drinks, ban unhealthy snacks and ensure healthy food is available on school grounds. Your government can also implement transparent food labelling with sugar icons to better inform parents and caregivers, restrict the marketing and availability of sugar-rich foods and SSB to children, and implement SSB taxation. Use FDI's [A Practical Guide to Reduce Sugars Consumption and Curb the Epidemic of Dental Caries](#) to help develop your sugar strategies.

**Does your country offer universal access to affordable and effective fluoride for the prevention of tooth decay?**

To increase the affordability and universal access to quality fluoride toothpaste, your government can remove taxation and tariffs on fluoride toothpaste, increase taxation of toothpastes without fluoride to discourage their use, enforce equity pricing (differential prices for different populations), promote generic competition and local production, improve capacities of national food and drug administrations for better monitoring of toothpaste quality, and strengthen and enforce the regulations of ISO 11609.

**Is there universal access to primary oral healthcare in your country?**

Universal access to primary oral healthcare should cover, at a minimum, pain relief, oral health promotion, and oral diseases management, including tooth decay. Your government can also integrate basic oral healthcare into its Universal Health Coverage framework to improve oral health outcomes and reduce inequalities in access to care.

**Does your government adopt an oral health in all policies approach?**

Your government can systematically adopt oral health in all policies, including those aimed at reducing poverty, increasing social inclusion, improving the general levels of education and employment, reducing barriers to healthcare, promoting affordable housing, safe water and sanitation, and protecting minority and vulnerable groups to achieve sustainable improvement in health and oral health care status.

**Is your government implementing any of the World Health Organization's 'best buys' and other recommended interventions to improve oral health?**

Financing mechanisms to help your government improve oral health through the WHO 'best buys' and other recommended interventions include: raising excise taxes on sugar, tobacco and alcohol, engaging in public-private partnerships, using targeted donor or development bank funding to cover the initial costs of a new oral health policy, and adding an oral health component to an existing health (or non-health) programme. Consult the [WHO Saving lives, spending less](#) report for case studies in financing the 'best buys'.

SCORE

Count the number of boxes you ticked

/10

It's never too early or too late to start improving the oral health status of your country. If you **ACT ON MOUTH HEALTH** by putting into practice the tips provided it will also have a positive impact on the general health and well-being of your citizens.

**DISCLAIMER**

Sugar in this document refers to free sugars that are added to foods and drinks by the manufacturer, cook, or consumer, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juice and fruit juice concentrates. It does not refer to sugar that is naturally present in fruits, vegetables and milk.