



Going to the Dentist Linked with Overall Well-Being

Go to the dentist at least once a year and you are more likely to feel better about your life overall, according to *Delta Dental Oral Health and Well-Being Survey* results announced earlier this year.

In fact, Americans who go to the dentist at least once a year are 22 percent more likely to report their overall well-being—their physical and emotional health—as good or better compared with those who seldom visit the dentist.

“Going to the dentist regularly is one part of taking care of ourselves,” says Dr. Bill Kohn, DDS, Delta Dental Plans Association’s vice president of dental science and policy. “Taking care of ourselves is taking control, and we feel better about our lives when we do.”

Not surprisingly, people who visit the dentist more often also tended to report better oral health. Americans who visit the dentist at least once a year are 37 percent more likely to report their oral health as good or better versus those who infrequently find themselves in a dentist’s chair.

Delta Dental’s survey of 1,003 American adults found that income and education play an important role in getting to the dentist. For example, 86 percent of Americans making \$100,000 a year or more visit the dentist at least once annually compared with 46 percent of Americans making less than \$25,000. About eight of 10 college-educated adults (83 percent) had regular dental visits. For those Americans without a college

degree, about six of 10 (59 percent) visit the dentist once a year.

The survey also showed some regional differences. For example, Americans in the Northeast (75 percent) visit the dentist more often than those in the South (60 percent), though that doesn’t translate to statistically significant differences in reported oral health.

Dental Coverage Associated with Dentist Visits, Well-Being

Dental coverage is also a significant factor in dental visits and overall well-being. Nearly eight of 10 Americans (78 percent) with dental coverage visit the dentist at least once a year versus only about half (52 percent) who don’t have coverage.

“The connection between dental coverage and dental visits perhaps isn’t surprising, but the numbers demonstrate the stark contrast in dental care,” Kohn says. “At Delta Dental, we strongly encourage those with coverage—and those without—to get the preventive care they need.”

In addition, Americans who have dental coverage are 14 percent more likely to say their overall well-being is good or better compared to those without dental coverage.

Reported Oral Health is Generally Strong

Half of Americans rate their oral health as very good or excellent, according to the Delta Dental study. Only 19 percent of Americans rate their oral

health as fair or poor. Stronger reported oral health is linked with income, education and age. Younger Americans—those ages 18 to 24 and those ages 25 to 44—are more likely to rate their oral health highly than older Americans.

Despite the relatively strong oral health findings, several oral health challenges remain:

More than one of four Americans (27 percent) say they have open oral health issues that they’d like to resolve. The biggest reason for not addressing the problem is ability to pay for the work (cited by 62 percent of those with unresolved issues), while nearly a quarter (23 percent) mentioned fear of the treatment.

More than one of five Americans (21 percent) say they have been advised by a dentist that they have gum disease.

About one of six Americans (16 percent) say they have missed work due to oral health issues beyond regular treatments and cleanings.

“Delta Dental sponsored the *Oral Health and Well-Being Survey* to shine a spotlight on the importance of oral health in America,” says Kohn. “As leaders in dental benefits, we know the importance of oral health for basic daily activities involving the mouth and the link between oral health and overall health. This study’s findings demonstrate the vital role that dental care plays in overall well-being.”