



Oral Health

Why is oral health important to Iowans?

Good oral health is more than a pretty smile. A healthy mouth is needed to speak clearly, be self-confident and eat nutritious food. The body's health is dependent on the mouth's health. This is especially true for individuals with diabetes, the elderly and pregnant women.

In 2016:

- One in six (16%) third graders had untreated decay.
- Almost half (46%) of third graders had no dental insurance or used public insurance for dental care.

In 2017:

- Nearly one in five (18%) older Iowans had untreated decay, one in three (29%) avoided certain food in the past year because of mouth problems, and more than one in five (21%) reported they needed care in the past year, but did not get it because they could not afford it.

In 2018-2020:

- One in two (50%) I-Smile Silver participants had untreated decay, two in five (43%) avoided certain food in the past year because of mouth pain, and more than two in three (69%) had not seen a dentist in over a year.

Did you know?

Cavities are largely preventable, but tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among children and adults.

A focus on health equity

I-Smile™ assists Medicaid-enrolled, uninsured, and underinsured children and pregnant women. I-Smile™ @ School (sealant program) includes children at elementary and middle schools with 40% or greater free-and-reduced-lunch rates, and the I-Smile™ Silver pilot project works with Iowa adults who have difficulty accessing dental care. These oral health programs focus on referrals to dentists and improved access to resources that address social determinants of health through individualized care coordination. Additionally, community water fluoridation benefits everyone, regardless of age, income or socio-economic status.

What does the department do?

- Operates the [I-Smile™ program](#), helping 23 local public health organizations promote the importance of oral health; provides preventive fluoride applications for infants, children and pregnant women; helps families make appointments and find payment sources for dental care; works with dental offices to build referral networks; and provides oral health education for families and the public to build awareness about healthy behaviors. More than 46,000 children benefited from I-Smile™ in 2020.
- Manage the evidence-based [I-Smile™ @ School program](#) through local public health organizations to provide dental screenings, fluoride, dental sealants, and oral health education for children in 1st through 8th grades. During school year 2019-2020, more than 13,500 children participated and 36,395 sealants were placed.
- Monitor fluoride levels throughout Iowa and provide education and outreach to the public about the benefits of [community water fluoridation](#).
- Oversee oral health [surveillance](#) through data analyses and distributing reports about Iowans' oral health status and ability to access and pay for care.



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What does the department do? (cont.)

- Develops and administers the [I-Smile™ Silver](#) pilot project through contracts with three county health departments, to improve Iowa adults' ability to achieve optimal oral health.
- Partner with Department on Aging, Department of Education and Department of Human Services to align program goals, leverage funding and seek optimal oral health outcomes.

Why is oral health important to Iowans? (cont.)

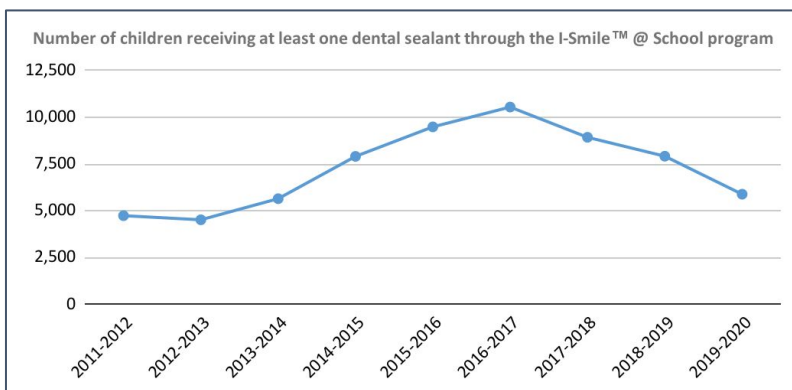
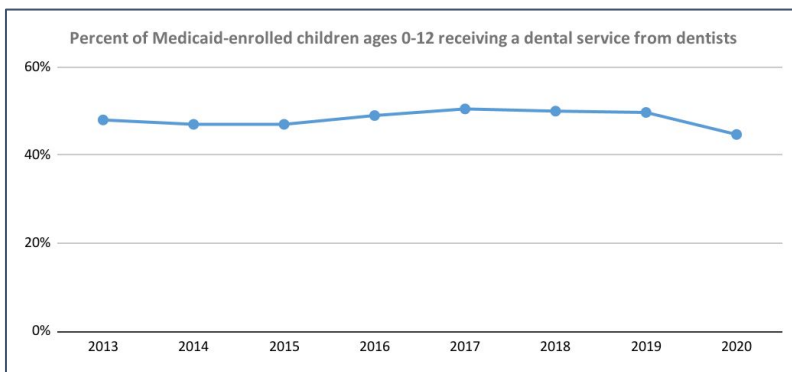
In 2019:

- 48% of pregnant women did not see a dentist during their pregnancy.
- 11% of pregnant women could not afford to go to the dentist or dental clinic

In 2020:

- 63% of Iowans on public water systems had access to optimally fluoridated water
- Less than one in five (18%) Medicaid-enrolled children ages 0-2 years saw a dentist. In comparison, over one in two (54%) Medicaid-enrolled children ages 3-12 years saw a dentist.

How do we measure our progress?



What can Iowans do to help?

- Learn about the importance of good oral health and how to keep your mouth healthy.
- Use the department's oral health staff and programs as trusted sources of oral health information and policy development.
- Advocate for community water fluoridation to reduce tooth decay.

Resources

	SFY 2019 Actual	SFY 2020 Actual	SFY 2021 Estimate
State Funds	\$274,658	\$274,592	\$274,592
Federal Funds	\$1,176,718	\$1,113,840	\$1,243,615
Other Funds	\$2,287,149	\$2,289,226	\$2,316,815
Total Funds	\$3,738,524	\$3,677,658	\$3,835,022
FTEs	8.99	8.81	9.10