



WEEKLY WEDNESDAY UPDATE

The Weekly Wednesday Update is our newsletter which we email every Wednesday with oral health, health and policy updates from around the state and nationally.

To view past issues [click here](#).

January 17, 2024

Volume 15, Issue 2

Scan the QR code



or click here to
sign up for our

**Weekly
Wednesday
Update.**



Week 2 at the Capitol: Oral Health Policy Updates

The Legislature has entered week two, and while it's been extremely cold outside, activity inside the Capitol has begun to heat up. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) presented their

enhanced budget requests at the House Social Services Budget Committee on Tuesday. We were pleased to see that Governor Kelly included \$370,000 in the KDHE budget for the Bureau of Oral Health. The agency has a CDC grant that helps the Bureau of Oral Health manage the school sealant and screening programs as well as community water fluoridation. This funding would ensure the Bureau of Oral Health continues its current operations after the CDC grant expires later this year.

Oral Health Kansas' top priority this year is advocating for funding to cover basic preventive dental care for adults in the Medicaid program. While the Kansas Medicaid program includes coverage for fillings, crowns, gum disease care, and dentures, basic preventive coverage is available only through the managed care organizations' value-added benefits (VAB). Kansas is the only state that uses a combination of Medicaid and VABs for adult dental coverage. How the VABs are structured varies by managed care organization and changes from year to year, making the system difficult to navigate for dental providers. When it is hard to understand how the most essential and basic dental care is covered, providers are reluctant to care for adults.

By ensuring the Kansas Medicaid program covers dental exams, x-rays, and cleanings for adults, one more barrier to accessing dental care will be eliminated. **Add your organization's name to the list of supporters of this policy change by filling out [this form](#).** More information is on our [basic preventive dental care advocacy webpage](#) and on this one-page flyer.



Poverty Awareness Month

Eating Healthy: Why It's Hard When You're Struggling

January is Poverty Awareness Month. Last week we began discussing how the stress of poverty can affect a family's ability to be able to do something as simple as brushing their teeth twice a day. Another thing many of us take for granted is our ability to eat healthy foods.

A healthy diet plays a crucial role in oral health. The foods we consume directly affect our teeth and gums. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and dairy products supplies essential vitamins and minerals that contribute to strong teeth and gums. Calcium, found in dairy products, helps fortify tooth enamel, while vitamin C from fruits and vegetables promotes gum health. On the

other hand, excessive intake of sugary snacks and acidic beverages can lead to tooth decay and gum disease. Practicing good nutrition not only supports overall well-being but also serves as one of the key factors in a healthy smile. This is not easy for families living in poverty and is another factor that puts people's oral health in jeopardy.

In certain low-income neighborhoods, accessing stores that offer fresh, quality food is a challenge. Residents often resort to corner stores or fast-food restaurants where the food is less nutritious but more convenient and affordable. This poses a difficulty for individuals in these areas to keep to a healthy diet as the better options are both scarce and expensive.

The financial constraints associated with limited income mean that healthier food choices, which are generally pricier, might be overlooked in favor of cheaper, less nutritious alternatives. The dilemma becomes a trade-off between affordability and health. Addressing this issue requires collaborative efforts to ensure that everyone, regardless of their financial situation, has the opportunity to make healthy food choices without being burdened by cost concerns. The goal is to provide everyone with the chance to prioritize health, irrespective of their budget constraints.

The state of Kansas is getting closer to ending the sales tax on food. The tax rate went down on January 1, 2024, from 4% to 2%. It is set to decline to zero on January 1, 2025. This tax policy is one small way in which people living with a limited income can afford food. Other solutions include setting up community gardens, ensuring food banks have nutritious options, and locating healthy food retailers in low-income neighborhoods. It is also important to simply remember that the stress of living in poverty makes many aspects of living a healthy life challenging and sometimes out of reach. Next week we will discuss the stress of poverty on families.



Brushing Your Teeth May Help Decrease the Risk of Pneumonia

Is it true? Could brushing your teeth help reduce the chances of getting hospital acquired pneumonia (HAP)? [Studies](#) show brushing your teeth can help decrease the risk of hospital

acquired pneumonia. The authors of a recent *JAMA Internal Medicine* article say "Daily toothbrushing may be associated with significantly lower rates of HAP, particularly in patients

receiving mechanical ventilation, lower rates of ICU mortality, shorter duration of mechanical ventilation, and shorter ICU length of stay.”

We do not want to see anyone in the hospital, but if you or a loved one must go, remember to pack a toothbrush and insist on daily toothbrushing. Also remember to replace your toothbrush if you have been sick so you don’t continue to spread the germs from your toothbrush.



National Oral Health Conference Early Bird Ends Soon

The 2024 National Oral Health Conference will be in St. Louis, Missouri April 15-17, with weekend workshops on April 13 and 14, 2024. Registration is now open! You can view the schedule [here](#). Click [here](#) for conference information and to register. Early bird registration ends January 31!



Upcoming Events

- Course: An Introduction to Value-Based Care in Oral Health: Moving from Volume to Value, 1 CE. Click [here](#) for the course information.
- Self paced courses: [Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals](#) and [Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers](#).
- Missouri Oral Health Policy Conference, March 7-8, 2024, DoubleTree by Hilton, Jefferson City, Missouri. Register [here](#).
- Alliance for a Healthy Kansas monthly meetings, [Events | Alliance for a Healthy Kansas 2022 \(expandkancare.com\)](#)
- **Save the date!** 2024 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 8.



During a heavy winter snow storm, volunteers made their way to Salina to help at the Kansas Mission of Mercy on

January 12 and 13. Hundreds of patients needing dental care braved the cold weather to get their dental needs met. The clinic helped 671 patients throughout both days. There was \$666,429 worth of dental care that was provided with over 1,000 extractions and over 600 fillings in two days! The time and care the volunteers provided was amazing!



Dr. John Fales , DDS

picture courtesy of Kansas Dental Charitable Foundation

The [Salina Post](#) covered the event and interviewed patients. This story provides a good vision of what patients see at the KMOM clinics although each event center is different. You can also find KMOM social media coverage on the Kansas Dental Charitable Foundation [Facebook](#). You can find future event information on the Kansas Dental Charitable Foundation's [website](#).



Sugary Drink Display

We have Adult and Children's Sugary Drink Display's available for reservations. These displays are eye catching at exhibits, schools, library, dental offices, clinics and just about anywhere you see them!

We only have a limited amount so please sign up soon if you're interested in reserving one. Click [here](#) to learn more about sugary drink display reservations!

Follow Us



Oral Health Kansas • PO BOX 4567 • Topeka, KS 66604
785.235.6039 phone • 785.233.5564 fax • info@oralhealthkansas.org
Copyright 2024