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Statement on Dentistry as Essential Health Care

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Statement on Dentistry as Essential Health Care

August 10, 2020

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CHICAGO, August 10, 2020 — A new interim policy from the American Dental Association (ADA) states dentistry is an “essential health care service,” reaffirming that oral health has long been recognized as an integral part of overall health.

“Whether it’s the current pandemic, a future epidemic or a natural disaster in a particular area, this policy recognizes the need for people to be able to continue to access the full range of dental services,” said ADA President Chad P. Gehani, D.D.S. “Oral health is integral to overall health — staying well depends on having access to health care, which includes dental treatment.”

Dr. Gehani added that regular dental visits are important because treatment, as well as prevention of dental disease, helps keep people healthy. “Beyond teeth and gums, the mouth also serves as a window to the rest of the body and can show signs of infection, nutritional deficiencies and systemic diseases,” he said.

The policy includes the following:

- Oral health is an integral component of systemic health.
- Dentistry is an essential health care service because of its role in evaluating, diagnosing, preventing or treating oral diseases, which can affect systemic health.

- The term “Essential Dental Care” be defined as any care that prevents and eliminates infection, preserves the structure and function of teeth as well as orofacial hard and soft tissues. Orofacial generally refers to the mouth, jaws and face.
- Essential dental care should continue to be delivered during global pandemics or other disaster situations.
- Government agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have acknowledged dentistry as an essential service needed to maintain the health of Americans so they can sustain their health and livelihoods and live resiliently during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

For more information and to read the full policy, visit [ADA.org](https://ada.org).

For more information about oral health, visit the ADA's website for consumers, MouthHealthy.org.

Editor's Note: Reporters are invited to follow the ADA on Twitter [@AmerDentalAssn](https://twitter.com/AmerDentalAssn)

About the ADA

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing 163,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA) is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit [ADA.org](https://ada.org). For more information on oral health, including prevention, care and treatment of dental disease, visit the ADA's consumer website MouthHealthy.org

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