

CAMP HILL, Pa. (May 10, 2023) — During Mental Health Awareness Month in May, it's important to recognize the impact your mental health can have on your oral health. Recent research suggests that there may be a two-way connection.

In 2023, [self-reported data](#) from the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) Study was used to look at the relationship between three categories of mental health symptoms and six types of oral health conditions. It concluded that higher levels of oral disease should be expected in patients with adverse mental health conditions, with greater prevalence as the severity of the illness increases.

[Another study in 2021](#) found that individuals identifying as having poor mental health were three times more likely to rate their oral health as poor. They were also less likely to be insured, with 69% of respondents claiming one or more unmet oral health needs.



“Having a mental illness can make doing day-to-day activities and tasks — such as keeping up with oral hygiene and regular cleanings at the dentist — a challenge,” said Roosevelt Allen, DDS, MAGD, ABGD, chief dental officer, United Concordia Dental. “Similarly, having poor oral health can impact your mental well-being. Left untreated, oral health issues — cavities, gum disease, bad breath, mouth pain and tooth loss, for example — can cause feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, shame and low self-esteem.”

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, more than 57 million adults experienced a mental illness in the United States in 2021, with depression and anxiety being the most common. Of those, more than 14 million had a serious mental illness, making them [2.7 times more likely](#) to lose all of their teeth.

“When you’re not regularly taking good care of your gums and teeth, bacterial infections can fester in the mouth leading to tooth decay, advanced stages of gum disease and later tooth loss,” said Allen.

The health of your mouth can also provide a window into potential mental health issues. Symptoms like jaw pain may indicate a patient is experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety from teeth grinding or worn tooth enamel may be the result of compulsive overbrushing or malnutrition from an eating disorder.

“Making certain lifestyle changes can benefit both your mental and oral health,” said Allen. “Eating a variety of nutritious foods, visiting your dentist regularly, engaging in healthy stress reduction activities, and practicing good and consistent oral hygiene can put you on the right track to achieving greater wellness.”

To learn more about United Concordia, visit [UnitedConcordia.com](https://www.unitedconcordia.com).

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