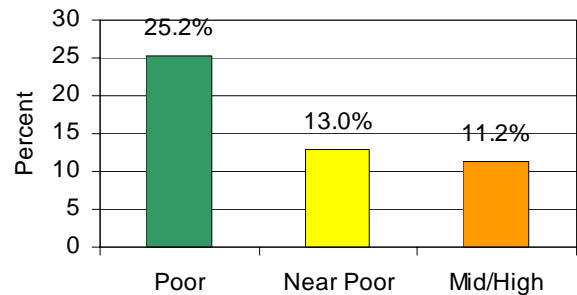


Oral Health Facts

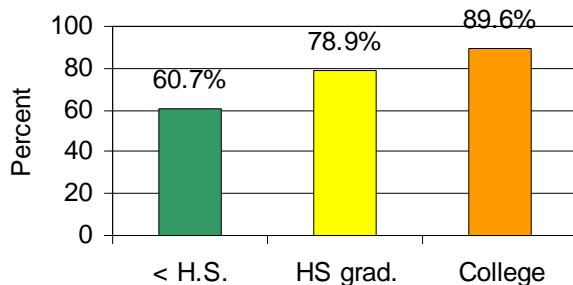
The Status of Oral Health

In general, the oral health of Americans has continued to improve over the past 50 years. Unfortunately certain groups carry a majority of the oral health burden. These groups are individuals of low socioeconomic status at the county, state and national levels. The Tioga County Health Surveys indicate that oral health declined between 1995 and 2000.

Percent of Tioga County Adults with a Current Toothache (2000)



Percent of Tioga Country Adults with a Regular Place/Person for Dental Care (2000)



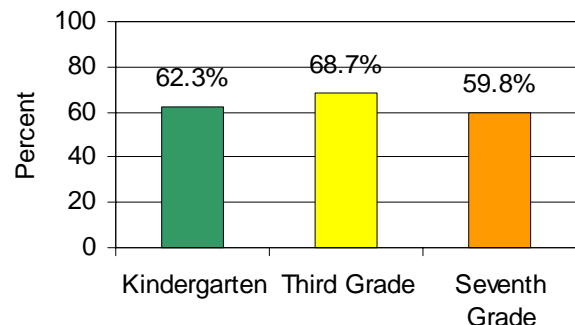
What are Oral Health Concerns for Adults?

In addition to tooth decay, adults often experience periodontal disease, gingivitis and tooth loss. Those without a regular place for dental care are less likely to adopt preventive oral health practices. Consistent with state and national data, Tioga County adults of low socioeconomic status are more likely to suffer from dental pain and are more likely to have never had a dental cleaning/exam.

What are the Oral Health Concerns for Children?

Lack of medical insurance, coupled by the misconception that primary teeth are unimportant, makes dental care a major unmet health need of children. Early childhood caries (ECC), which are treated and untreated tooth decay, is the most common chronic childhood disease. Poor oral health in children is associated with compromised nutrition, persistent dental pain, distractions from learning and play, social embarrassment, difficulties speaking and missed school days. All of these affect a child's physical, mental and social development.

Percent of Students Failing School Dental Exam by Grade (2003-04)



What Are the Barriers to Oral Health Care?

Cost is the biggest barrier to oral health care. While 12.6% of adults in Tioga County do not have medical insurance, 44.3% do not have dental insurance. In addition to cost, barriers to oral health care can include: an unfavorable dentist-to-patient ratio, a limited number of dentists who take Medical Assistance patients on a regular basis, lack of transportation, inability to take time from work and the perception that oral health care is unimportant.

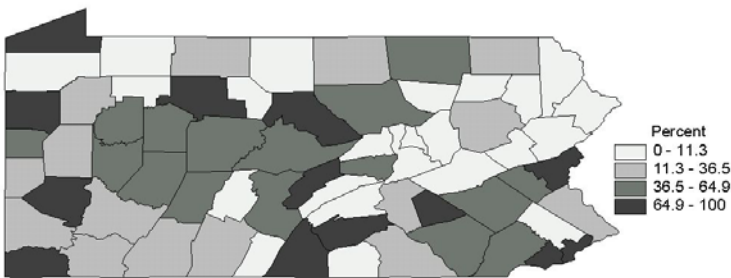
Tioga County Adults - Most Recent Dental Cleaning/Exam By Type of Insurance (2000)

	<u>1 Year Ago</u>	<u>More Than 1 Year Ago</u>	<u>Never</u>
Private	63.4%	29.7%	6.9%
Medicare	40.8%	35.9%	23.4%
Medicaid	39.3%	42.9%	17.9%
Other	46.6%	34.6%	18.6%
None	35.8%	49.1%	15.1%

Is Fluoride a Safe Way to Prevent Tooth Decay?

Overwhelming scientific evidence shows that when used properly and at the appropriate dosage, fluoridated water and fluoride containing products are a safe way to prevent tooth decay. While fluoridated community water systems are safe and beneficial for all users, the use of fluoride tablets are usually limited to those who use private wells or community water systems without optimal fluoride levels. Ask your health care provider about the need and appropriate dosage of fluoride for you and your family.

Percent of Public Water System Population Receiving Fluoridated Water



Actions to Promote Oral Health:

- Quitting smoking, if you have not done so already. Pennsylvania provides a free quit line to encourage smokers who want to quit. The number is 1-877-724-1090.
- Develop good oral health habits to help prevent conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and adverse pregnancy outcomes which have been shown to be related to poor oral health; likewise, see your oral health provider if you are undergoing any medical condition or treatment which may impact oral health.
- Promote good oral health habits early by discouraging the use of pacifying bottles with infants.
- Avoid accidental oral/facial injuries and malformations by wearing appropriate head and mouth gear.
- Educate yourself and others on the scientific evidence that shows proper fluoride use is a safe and effective way to prevent tooth decay.

Those seeking assistance in any of these areas should talk with their primary health care provider or an oral health professional. In Tioga County, contact Guideline at 1-800-332-6718 for referral to the appropriate service.



Data for this fact sheet were taken from a report entitled *Oral Health in Tioga County*. For more information regarding this fact sheet or the full report, please call (570) 662 – 4767 or email Ishelham@mansfield.edu.