# Smiles for Life:

# A National oral health curriculum

## Implementation guide (3rd edition)

## Table of Contents

Page

Section 1: Smiles for Life 2 - 4

Section 2: Getting Started 4 - 6

Section 3: Core Curriculum 6 - 15

Section 4: Are You Ready? 16

## section 1: Smiles for Life

Oral health care is an essential component of comprehensive health care and integral to overall health and wellness. Smiles for Life is an interprofessional curriculum designed for educators, students, and all primary care providers, including front-line workers. The mission of Smiles for Life is to promote interprofessional collaborative practice and education to improve oral health. This manual will introduce you to Smiles for Life and provide guidance on how to implement the curriculum.

Background

Smiles for Life was developed in 2005 by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Group on Oral Health. The 3rd edition of Smiles for Life was released in June 2010. In 2011, the curriculum was honored by the American Dental Association and American Academy of Family Physicians with letters of commendation. The Smiles for Life multidisciplinary steering committee continues its broad focus on enriching oral health education for all primary care providers, and in 2016, a curriculum designed for front-line health workers was added. Other curricular enhancements included the addition of a course on global oral health, interactive games, a smartphone App, videos, and supplemental resources. Smile for Life courses are now being adapted for a Canadian primary care provider audience.

Smiles for Life is now the Nation’s most comprehensive oral health curriculum for primary care providers, and widely used in health professions schools, post-graduate training programs, and clinical practice settings. The curriculum has been endorsed by 20 national professional organizations.

Curriculum Overview



Smiles for Life includes **teaching materials** to help *educators implement the curriculum.* Each of the 45-minute PowerPoint presentations can be downloaded, along with annotated presenter notes and companion videos. Other resources include an Oral Health App on Android/iOS platforms, Educational Objectives, Test Questions, PowerPoint Slide Sorter, Videos, Interactive Games, Clinical Cases, and Interprofessional Education/Practice Resources.

Smiles for Life offers eight 60-minute **online courses** covering core areas of oral health relevant to primary care. Learning outcomes are evaluated through post-assessments.





Smiles for Life offers **continuing education credit**, at no cost, to many health professionals, including: medical assistants, midwives, nurses, pediatricians, pharmacists, physicians, physician assistants and dental professionals.

Why consider this curriculum?

Millions of Americans lack access to basic oral health care. We also know that lack of access contributes to oral health disparities, particularly for vulnerable and underserved patients, populations, and communities. With adequate education and training in oral health, primary care providers can play a pivotal role in increasing access to oral health care and preventive services. Smiles for Life curriculum provides a foundation for developing core clinical competencies in oral health: risk assessment, evaluation, preventive interventions, communication, education, and interprofessional collaborative practice.

## section 2: Getting started

Online Courses

Courses are designed for interactive online education by individuals or small groups. Each online course takes approximately 60 minutes to complete. Learners are encouraged to register as a user, however the courses may be viewed as an unregistered guest. Interactive clinical cases are included which can be used either by linking out from the course at designated pages or separately. Each clinical case can be completed in approximately 10 minutes. At the end of the course, registered users who complete the post-test and achieve a minimum score of 80% will be able to print a personalized, uniquely numbered certificate of completion. Unregistered guests are not able to take the post-test or generate a certificate of completion.

PowerPoint Presentations

The curriculum includes eight PowerPoint presentations covering core areas of oral health, and designed to be presented in approximately 45-50 minutes. Speaker notes and relevant references can be downloaded in PDF format for use while presenting to a group. Speakers who are not familiar with the subject material are encouraged to complete the relevant online course(s) before presenting for the first time.

A PowerPoint Slide Sorter Tool is provided, which allows customization of your presentations by downloading select slides from one or more courses.

If you cannot present all of the slides (e.g., time constraints), then it is acceptable to “hide” some slides within PowerPoint as needed. We recommend projecting the slides in a relatively dark room to allow maximum visibility of the many intra-oral photographs.

Examination Questions

Each online course concludes with examination questions. A minimum score of 80% is required to receive certification of completion and earn continuing education credit. A separate pdf file of test questions is available for use with groups to assess learner knowledge either before and/or after the PowerPoint presentations.

Interactive Games

Interactive games can be used by an individual learner or in a classroom setting. The games can be used as a pre-test or to review knowledge following course completion.

Resources for Further Learning

The website lists high quality resources, including articles, books, and websites that facilitate further learning about oral health. They are organized by subject area. The list is not designed to be comprehensive, but instead to serve as a first stop for general learning. Detailed references on topics within each subject area are included in the speaker notes that accompany each PowerPoint presentation and are embedded within the pages of the online courses.

## section 3: CORE Curriculum

Course 1: Relationship of Oral and Systemic Health

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses the nature, prevalence, and consequences of oral disease throughout the life cycle with a focus on oral and systemic health correlations. Clinicians will learn their role in preventing oral disease, addressing frequently encountered oral problems, and working as part of an interprofessional team to promote oral health among their patients. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Define the meaning of oral health and the prevalence and consequences of oral disease. * Recognize relationships between oral and systemic disease. * Highlight the role of primary care and community health teams in promoting oral health. * Understand concepts and impact of interprofessional education and collaborative practice. | 1. Prevalence and impact of oral disease 2. Oral and systemic health linkages 3. Groups at risk for oral problems 4. Cultural considerations 5. Role of the primary care physician in promoting oral health 6. Summary and assessment |

Course 2: Child Oral Health

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses the prevalence, etiology, and consequences of early childhood caries (ECC). Clinicians will consider various influences on oral health and learn to assess risk factors, recognize the various stages of ECC, and counsel patients on preventive techniques. Additionally, this module will discuss common pediatric concerns such as teething, oral injury, and non-nutritive sucking. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Describe the consequences, etiology, and prevalence of dental caries through childhood. * Recognize the stages of Early Childhood Caries (ECC) on oral examination. * Assess a child's risk for caries, including ECC. * List caries management strategies. * Discuss prevention through risk assessment, oral hygiene, fluoride, diet, and establishment of a dental home. * Review common oral concerns in children and adolescents and offer appropriate guidance. * Discuss child, family, and community influences on oral health outcomes of children. | 1. Early Childhood Caries 2. ECC Recognition 3. ECC Risk Assessment 4. ECC Prevention 5. Common Pediatric Concerns 6. Influences on Children’s Oral Health 7. Summary & Assessment |

Course 3: Adult Oral Health

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses how adult oral health is impacted by disease, aging, medications, and substance use. This course reviews risk factors and etiologies of oral conditions, appropriate treatment and referral procedures, oral disease prevention, dental care coordination for patients requiring antibiotic prophylaxis, and collaborative anticoagulation management for patients undergoing oral procedures. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Recognize adult caries and gum disease, gingivitis, and periodontal disease. * Describe the oral effects of common medications, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. * Identify factors, including chronic medical conditions, that influence oral health. * List indications for antibiotic prophylaxis for dental procedures. * Demonstrate understanding of dental procedure management in anticoagulated patients. * Identify and manage common oral lesions. | 1. Adult oral health and disease 2. Common oral lesions 3. Prophylaxis and anticoagulation 4. Summary and assessment |

Course 4: Acute Dental Problems

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses the nature of oral pain, as well as acute dental problems precipitated by oral infections or trauma. Clinicians will learn to treat oral pain; accurately assess, treat, and refer patients with oral infections; recognize and triage true dental emergencies; and promote the use of protective equipment to prevent oral injuries. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Diagnose, initially manage, and appropriately refer for: oral pain, oral infections, dental trauma to primary and permanent teeth. * Describe the common characteristics of dental trauma in children and adults. * Identify two true dental emergencies. * Implement strategies aimed at the prevention of oral injuries. | 1. Oral pain 2. Oral infections 3. Dental trauma 4. Trauma to primary teeth 5. Trauma to permanent teeth 6. Injury prevention 7. Summary and assessment |

Course 5: Oral Health for Women: Pregnancy and Across the Life Span

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses the importance of oral health before, during, and after pregnancy. Clinicians will explore the prevalence of oral disease during pregnancy and its consequences for both mothers and children, as well as review dental treatment guidelines for pregnant women. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Elicit risk factors for periodontal disease and dental caries. * Perform an oral examination using proper anatomical terms and terminology. * Reduce the risk of caries transmission from mother to child. * Apply the evidence for periodontitis affecting perinatal outcomes. * Manage common oral conditions in pregnancy. * Counsel pregnant patients about the safety of dental care. * Improve dental access for pregnant women through interprofessional collaboration. * Promote and address oral health issues across the lifespan for women. | 1. Anatomy, terminology, examination 2. Caries transmission risk 3. Effects of periodontal disease 4. Oral conditions in pregnancy 5. Dental treatment in pregnancy 6. What clinicians can do 7. Oral health issues across the lifespan for women 8. Summary and assessment |

Course 6: Caries Risk Assessment, Fluoride Varnish & Counseling

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course focuses on caries prevention. It offers a brief review of Early Childhood Caries (ECC) and fluoride use as part of a comprehensive approach to a child's oral health. Specifically, clinicians will learn the benefits, appropriate safety precautions, and dosing for fluoride, as well as how to apply fluoride varnish and provide follow-up care. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Review the prevalence, etiology, and consequences of early childhood caries (ECC). * Perform an oral examination on small children. * Use a Caries Risk Assessment Tool to:   + Identify specific risk factors and protective factors;   + Document clinical findings; and   + Provide appropriate anticipatory guidance and timely dental referrals. * Discuss the effects, sources, and benefits of fluoride.   + Describe the benefits and indications for fluoride varnish.   + Demonstrate the application of fluoride varnish.   + Describe strategies for an effective office-based varnish program. * Advise families on strategies to prevent caries. | 1. Review of ECC 2. ECC: Recognition 3. ECC: Risk assessment 4. Fluoride 5. Fluoride varnish 6. Varnish application 7. Other prevention strategies 8. Summary and assessment |

Course 7: The Oral Examination

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses how to perform consistent and thorough oral examinations of children and adults. Clinicians will learn to differentiate between normal and abnormal findings, and develop an awareness of the examination needs of special populations. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Describe basic oral anatomy and characteristics of healthy teeth. * Demonstrate proper use of readily available equipment to perform an oral examination on adults, infants, and children. * Perform a consistent, thorough, and non-threatening oral examination of infants and children. * Perform a consistent and thorough oral, face, and neck examination of adults. * Differentiate between normal and abnormal findings. * Develop awareness of challenges involved in the examination of special populations | 1. Oral examination preparation 2. Oral examination: Children 3. Oral examination: Adults 4. Special populations 5. Summary and assessment |

Course 8: Geriatric Oral Health

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses the vital role many health professionals can play in promoting the oral health needs of older adults. Clinicians will learn how to perform a comprehensive oral assessment, identify and manage common geriatric oral conditions, counsel patients on effective preventive measures, and collaborate with dental professionals. Additionally, this module will address the link between oral and systemic health and review common oral side effects of medications. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Describe how socioeconomic issues affect geriatric oral health. * Complete an accurate oral assessment of elderly patients. * Identify and manage common oral conditions in the elderly. * Describe oral-systemic relationships in the elderly. * Discuss common oral effects of medications. * Implement effective oral preventive measures for the elderly and their caregivers. * Recognize and describe the elements of effective primary care – dental collaboration. | 1. Oral health needs of the elderly 2. Oral health assessment 3. Common oral problems 4. Oral-systemic linkages 5. Oral effects of medication 6. Oral preventive care 7. Medical-dental collaboration 8. Summary and assessment |

Course 9: Global Oral Health

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** This course addresses the burden of global oral health diseases and key issues related to reducing oral health disparities across the globe. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Define global oral health. * Describe global oral health epidemiology across the lifespan. * Discuss principles of promoting oral health and building health capacity in global settings. * Understand the importance of working with stakeholders and displaying cultural humility. * Identify resources for global oral health best practices and advancement of skills for non-dental health providers. * Utilize this global oral health approach with new immigrants and refugees. | 1. Global oral health: Basic definitions 2. Global oral epidemiology across the lifespan 3. Other conditions to consider 4. NOMA – orofacial gangrene 5. Global urbanization 6. Prevention in global oral health 7. Principles of team care 8. Interprofessional collaborations 9. Dental therapist – new team players 10. Stakeholders 11. Creating sustainability 12. Cultural humility 13. Cultural practice examples 14. List of resource materials 15. World Health Organization Triage 16. Other interventions to consider |

Course 10: Front Line Health Workers

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description:** The audience for this curriculum is Front Line Health Workers who provide outreach, advocacy, patient education, care coordination, health care navigation, and social support for the communities they serve. This workforce includes community health workers and representatives, promotores de salud, health educators, case managers, care coordinators, public health workers, community health advocates, health advisors or advocates, patient navigators, outreach workers, family resource workers, peer health promoters, and others.   This curriculum is designed to engage Front Line Health Workers in a national movement to promote oral health and eradicate dental disease and is ideally presented sequentially. Each module can be presented in 45-60 minutes and a minimum of 4 hours will be needed to complete the entire curriculum. Please consider downloading the accompanying Educator Handbook and Oral Health Resources document for your audience. | |
| **Educational Objectives** | **Topical Outline** |
| * Describe the relationship between oral health and overall health. * Discuss the prevalence and impact of oral diseases. * Identify barriers to maintaining oral health. * Discuss strategies to promote oral health equity. * Identify opportunities to integrate oral health in front line health worker practice. | 1. Introduction to national movement to promote oral health and eradicate dental disease 2. Child oral health 3. Pregnancy and women’s oral health 4. Adult oral health 5. Oral health resources |

section 4: are you ready?

How can you prepare a health professions workforce to integrate oral health and primary care?

* Educate primary care students and providers about oral health risk assessment, evaluation, prevention, communication, education, and collaborative practice.
* Educate dental students and providers about the oral-systemic connection.
* Emphasize oral health as an essential component of comprehensive health care.
* Promote the integration of oral health in primary care practice. Practice tools, patient education materials, and an office integration guide are available in the Resources section of the Smiles for Life website [www.smileforlifeoralhealth.org](http://www.smileforlifeoralhealth.org)
* Serve as an oral health champion.

Implementation Support

Members of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Group on Oral Health and the Smiles for Life Steering Committee are committed to ensuring the integration of oral health and primary care practice. For more information, please contact our Program Coordinator Lisa Forsberg at [lisa.forsberg@niioh.org](mailto:lisa.forsberg@niioh.org)

Citation

To reference Smiles for Life, please use the following citation:

Clark MB, Douglass AB, Maier R, Deutchman M, Gonsalves W, Silk H, Wrightson AS, Quinonez R, Dolce MC, Dalal M, Rizzolo D, Sievers K. Smiles for Life: A National Oral Health Curriculum. 3rd Edition. Society of Teachers of Family Medicine. 2010 [www.smilesforlifeoralhealth.com](http://www.smilesforlifeoralhealth.com).

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us! If you have suggestions for change or recommendations for additional content, please contact Lisa Forsberg at [lisa.forsberg@niioh.org](mailto:lisa.forsberg@niioh.org)