



# ORAL HEALTH BYTES

A Newsletter For Local Oral Health Programs

## Tobacco Cessation and Oral Cancer Awareness



Oral cancer is the largest group of cancers that fall into the head and neck cancer category, which includes mouth, tongue, head and neck, and throat cancer. According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), only 68 percent of people diagnosed with oral cancer survive more than five years. Those who do survive may suffer long-term problems, such as severe facial disfigurement or difficulties with eating and speaking. The reason for such a high mortality rate is that these cancers are usually found in late-stage development. The best method to detect oral cancer in its early stages is through regular oral cancer examinations by a dental provider or oral health professional.

### Quick Statistics:

#### Oral Cancer Relative Survival (2012–2018)

- Overall, 68% of people with oral cancer survive for 5 years.
- Oral cancer survival rates are significantly lower for Black and American Indian/Alaska Native men and women.
- Diagnosing oral cancer at an early, localized stage significantly increases 5-year survival rates.

## More information:

[Mouth Healthy](#)

[Cancer and Dental Health](#)

[National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research](#)

[Understanding oral cancer](#)

[Check your mouth \(self-exam\)](#)

April 17, 2024, Oral Cancer Workshop: [Empowering Change: Using Brief Motivational Interviewing for Tobacco Cessation in Oral Cancer Prevention](#) (co-hosted by the American Dental Hygienists' Association)

ADA CE Online: free, on-demand resources related to oral cancer and HPV:

- [Preventing HPV Cancers in Action Part 1: The Critical Role of the Dentist.](#)
- [Preventing HPV Cancers in Action Part 2: Dentists As Vaccinators.](#)
- [Preventing HPV Cancers in Action Part 3: 'Building Blocs' — Medical-Dental Collaboration Models and More.](#)

## From the Dental Director - A Thank You



After nearly 9 years as your state dental director, it is with mixed emotions that I announce my retirement. I plan to move closer to my granddaughter in Bethesda, MD. I began my career in the New York State Department of Health just before the start of the AIDS epidemic and am ending it here with the California Department of Public Health after the COVID-19 pandemic. These were challenging times for the profession, and I am proud to say that I was part of the team offering science-based guidelines to create a safe dental office environment.

During my time in California, we developed a state oral health plan, a robust statewide oral health program, surveillance and performance management capacity, a partnership to promote oral health, resources for technical assistance, and a road map to support community water fluoridation and school dental programs. I want to thank the administration for the opportunity to lead a team of talented colleagues and dedicated partners. I enjoyed working with you. I feel good that I am leaving my work in your capable hands.

In Partnership, *Jayanthi Kulkarni*

# Calendar

- April: Oral Cancer Awareness Month
- April 17: Oral Cancer workshop hosted by ADHA (free, CE available)
- April 22 - 26: Every Kid Healthy week
- April 30: Budget Revisions Due, if needed
- May 5 - 11: Drinking Water week
- May 12 - 17: Women's Health week



April is designated as Oral Cancer Awareness Month, underscoring the vital connection between dental health and overall well-being. This month serves as a crucial reminder to undergo comprehensive dental check-ups, which can potentially uncover hidden oral health issues, including early signs of oral cancer. These check-ups are vital as they enable the detection of oral health problems that may otherwise go unnoticed. Early identification and preventive care can significantly impact outcomes, contributing to the collective effort to safeguard community health.

## Unveiling Proactive Oral Health Resources: Explore the Power of Prevention



In our ongoing commitment to proactive oral health care, Smile, California is pleased to introduce our latest educational tool, the fotonovela titled “Don’t Wait Until It Hurts to See the Dentist.” This engaging story follows Carlos on his journey, highlighting the consequences of neglecting regular dental check-ups. Through this story, we emphasize the support available through the Medi-Cal Dental Program and underscore the importance of prioritizing routine dental care to mitigate pain and complications.

We invite you to explore and share our fotonovela and other proactive oral health resources through the following links:

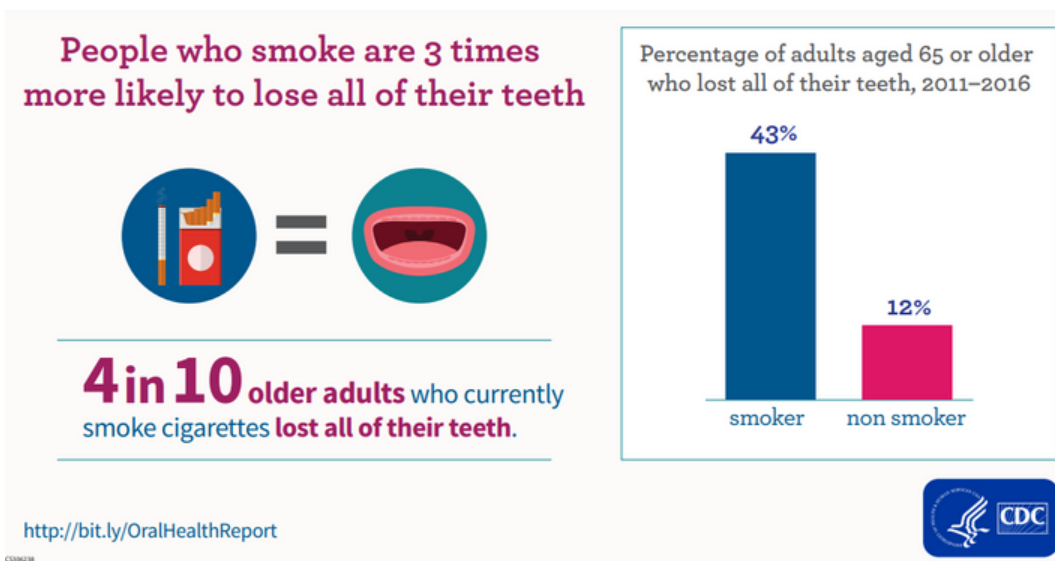
- [English Fotonovela](#) | [Spanish Fotonovela](#) | [Interactive Fotonovela](#)
- Don't Wait Until It Hurts to See the Dentist Video: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Don't Wait Until It Hurts to See the Dentist Video cut-down: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)

To stay updated on the Smile, California campaign, [sign up for Smile Alerts](#).

## CDPH Tobacco Prevention Program

### Oral Health, Tobacco, & Nicotine

It is well documented that smoking and other tobacco use can cause oral health problems, such as oral cancer, gum disease, tooth loss, slowed healing after oral procedures, tooth staining, and bad breath.<sup>1</sup> For individuals who smoke or use smokeless tobacco, quitting tobacco and nicotine is one of the best things they can do for their oral health.



The California Oral Health Plan includes a goal to increase the percentage of patients who receive evidence-based tobacco cessation counseling and other cessation aids in dental care settings. However, dental health professionals may not always have the time or experience to provide these cessation services. That's where *Kick It California* (KIC) comes in!

“ The most effective strategy to quit tobacco and nicotine is to combine evidence-based quit counseling with a quit aid.<sup>2</sup> ”

## KIC Free Cessation Services

KIC, formerly the California Smokers' Helpline 1-800-NO-BUTTS, has served more than 1 million people since the program started in 1992. It is funded by the California Department of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control, and First 5 California.

### Ask, Advise, Refer

People are more likely to get KIC Quit Coaching when referred by their healthcare provider. Providers have options for referring their patients to KIC. Visit [KickItCA.org/health-professionals](https://KickItCA.org/health-professionals) to learn more.

**KICK IT California**

**What happens after referral?**

- QUIT COACH CALL**  
Quit Coach will call within 2 business days of receiving the referral.
- QUIT PLAN**  
Quit Coach will help create a personalized Quit Plan.
- QUIT AIDS**  
Most smokers qualify for free nicotine patches delivered to their home.

After the first call, a **Quit Coach** will proactively follow up with the person at key points after they've quit, to help them stay motivated and to increase their chances of **quitting for good**.

**Program Benefits**

- TOTALLY FREE
- 1:1 QUIT COACHING
- PERSONALIZED QUIT PLANS
- EVIDENCE-BASED PROTOCOLS
- FREE NICOTINE PATCHES AND HOME DELIVERY

## Education & Training Materials

KIC provides basic education and training materials on tobacco and nicotine cessation topics. For more information, visit [KickItCA.org/health-professionals](https://KickItCA.org/health-professionals).

The California Tobacco Prevention Program (CTPP) also offers several cessation resources and services. For specific healthcare provider and dental professional materials, visit [cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CTCB/Pages/CessationServicesAndResources](https://cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CTCB/Pages/CessationServicesAndResources).

For questions about [Kick It California](https://KickItCA.org), please email [cshoutreach@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:cshoutreach@health.ucsd.edu).

## COHTAC Tobacco Cessation Resources

This toolkit and webinar found on the COHTAC website provide practical tools and evidence-based resources to help dental providers and their tobacco-using patients. These resources also can help LOHPs complete work plan activities for objective 4 (tobacco cessation).

[Tobacco Cessation Toolkit for California Dental Providers.pdf \(ucsf.edu\)](#)

[Tobacco Cessation for CA Dental Providers](#) (online one-hour webinar)

The COHTAC team also recommends this tobacco prevention toolkit:

<https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit.html>

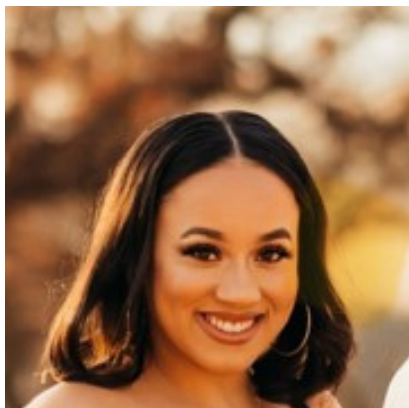
## CDA HPV and Dentist Champions Resource

California Dental Association released a new resource for dentists to support their promotion and education of HPV vaccination. To support dentists as champions for disease prevention, CDA outlines tips for talking about HPV, how to respond to common questions, and where the highest need for HPV promotion is in the state. In California, there are disparate HPV vaccine rates by county, which jeopardize the health of California's most vulnerable communities. Furthermore, counties with lower HPV vaccination have higher HPV- attributable cancer rates.

Oropharyngeal cancer is now the most common cancer attributed to HPV in the United States, surpassing rates of cervical cancer recorded in 2019. By increasing HPV vaccination rates, healthcare providers, including dentists, would be able to prevent thousands of cancers. Dentists have a unique role in supporting HPV vaccination as they are often the primary detector of HPV-related oral cancers. The new [Human Papillomavirus and Dentist Champions resource](#), along with other CDA resources, can be found at the CDA [Oral Cancer and HPV site](#).



## OOH Team Spotlight: Nicole Garvin



Nicole is a contract manager and personal liaison for the Office of Oral Health. She started as an office assistant for Dr. Kumar then promoted twice to her current role. Nicole has worked for the state for 6.5 years, and all that time has been with the Office of Oral Health.

As a contract manager, Nicole processes budgets, invoices, and contract renewals for the LOHP counties that she oversees. She enjoys establishing and building partnerships with her counties and appreciates the ongoing collaborative effort between OOH and the LOHPs to improve and advance oral health equity for their communities. As a personnel liaison, Nicole serves as the bridge between OOH and the CDPH human resources branch. She is the go-to person for figuring out the forms and processes needed to make HR transactions smooth and effective. Not an easy feat.

Born and raised in Sacramento, Nicole, her husband, daughter, and 3.5-year-old Yorkie still call it home. When not at work, she enjoys spending time with her family, going to theme parks, and basketball. She’s in her “Basketball Mom Era,” meaning her family lives and breathes the sport. Nicole coaches her daughter’s 3/4th recreation team, where they went 11-0 for Winter League, winning the championship game against a 5/6th team. The team is now preparing for Spring League. Outside of sports and family, Nicole enjoys a good walk around the neighborhood. Happy Springtime!



## LOHP Spotlight: Nevada County



Nevada County, California, is in the western slope of the Sierra Nevada foothills and has a population of roughly 102,000. The county is rural with deep historical significance from the gold rush era and is home to the historic towns of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and Truckee. The area is a nature lover’s paradise with many hiking trails, lakes, and the famous Yuba River.

For National Children’s Dental Health Month (NCDHM), the Nevada County Oral Health Program (NCOHP) wanted to bring awareness to the importance of children’s oral health and how public health is working to address the needs of the community through a school-based dental program.

## Continued LOHP Spotlight: Nevada County



The program focuses on education, screenings, prevention, and providing a pathway to care in a community underserved by Medi-Cal providers and affordable dental care. This school year, approximately 500 students have been screened, mostly for Kindergarten Oral Health Assessments.

In honor of NCDHM, the program announced it was expanding screenings to second and third graders for sealants and other treatment recommendations. Thirty-five second and third graders were screened at Scotten Elementary in Grass Valley. “We hope that the screenings will help families without a dental home find a pathway to the care they need,” said Program Coordinator, Jamie Hanf.

Students with Medi-Cal will have the option to receive preventive treatment services with a Registered Dental Hygienist in Alternative Practice (RDHAP) on a second visit after their initial screening. Students without insurance are encouraged to sign up for Medi-Cal to take advantage of what the school-based program offers.

By expanding the program and making preventive services more available, the NCOHP is addressing key barriers to good oral health facing children and families in Nevada County. The NCOHP Coalition website, [SmileNevadaCounty.com](http://SmileNevadaCounty.com), provides education and local resources.

[Nevada County Public Health’s Oral Health Program Encourages Good Dental Habits for National Children’s Dental Health Month \(yubanet.com\)](http://yubanet.com)

Email [DentalDirector@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:DentalDirector@cdph.ca.gov) to suggest future articles and provide feedback.

Design by Pang Vang. Content by Karen Jacoby.