

Oral health professionals need to stay current with evidence-based information. Through federal government agencies, a wealth of information is provided to dental hygienists and other healthcare providers. One of these agencies is the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC is a federal government agency of the Department of Health and Human Services. The intention of the CDC is to provide credible, current information to enhance, promote and improve health decisions, with the objective of improving the overall quality of life. The mission of the CDC focuses on preventing and controlling disease, injury and disabilities. The CDC is designed as a partnership with other organizations and agencies throughout the nation to work together to accomplish and meet the goal of improving the health of people. In addition to local and state health departments, the CDC partners with private corporations, the media and the general public to fulfil this task.

The CDC website can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov> (Fig. 1). The website is comprehensive, current and continually updated. Although it contains a vast amount of information, it is user-friendly and has hyperlinks embedded in the text that aid the user in navigating the site. The site offers information that is specific for oral health, as well as general health resources. It serves as an



Fig1. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website home page (<http://www.cdc.gov>)

excellent tool, and is easily accessible to either the consumer or the healthcare professional. Additionally, several portions of the site are available in English and Spanish, and offer fact-sheets, posters and other printed material in both languages, assuring that these resources are available to a more diverse audience.

The home page of the CDC offers links to obtain information within the website. The top navigational bar headings are *About CDC, Press Room, Funding, A-Z Index, Centers, Institutes & Offices, Training and Employment*. From the home page, one can also access links specific to the CDC website, and obtain information on *Health and Safety Tips, Publications and Products, Data and Statistics, Conferences and Events, and Programs and Campaigns* all through roll-over tabs.

The *Centers, Institutes, & Offices* link from the top navigational bar leads to a listing of the offices. With another click, one can access the *National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*. A link then connects to a page on oral health, where one can find the oral health website (Fig. 2). Anyone using the specific address can reach this 'site within a site'; if not, they can be linked up from the main <http://www.cdc.gov> site by going through the steps outlined above. The address is <http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/index.htm>. All websites start with a home page that is usually called 'index', so when one sees that term, they know they are entering a new website within the larger umbrella website.



Fig2. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) oral health website (<http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/index.htm>)

This mini-site within the main CDC website is where dental hygienists can access the latest and most current information on oral health care. One can navigate easily using the links given on the left-hand side of the page. The links on the page include *Browse by Topic*, *Resource Library*, *Guidelines and Recommendations*, *Data Systems* and *State-by-State Reports*. The *Browse by Topic* link includes information on adults, children, infectious diseases, water fluoridation and a complete A–Z index for locating a specific topic. There is a *Resource Library* link, which has fact sheets, journal articles and press releases. The *Guidelines and Recommendations* link for clinicians and public health professionals includes portable document files in either a summary or a full report format. These document topics include community prevention programmes, fluoride, infection control, oral cancer and water fluoridation. Interested professionals can obtain continuing education credit after completing an examination within the *Guidelines for Infection Control In Dental Health Care Settings* document and sending the post-test by fax, or electronically, directly to the CDC. There is a *Data Systems* link which has information provided by the Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Data Resource Center (DRC), My Water's Fluoride (MWF) providing information on water systems and the fluoridation status of specific water systems and information on the National Oral Health Surveillance System (NOHSS) offering oral health information and statistics. Additionally, oral health maps can be viewed providing a schematic of water fluoridation by state or county,

and the synopses page outlines characteristics of state oral health programmes. The *State-by-State Reports* link gives a breakdown of co-operative agreements and initiatives of each state.

On the right-hand side of the pages are current *Press Releases* that contain information in printer-friendly format. Within the press release pages are links to websites where one can read the complete document that resulted in the press release.

The oral health 'site within a site' also conveniently links the professional to the main CDC's home page, search page and site index, so one is always just a click away from any of those important resources. These links can be found in the top navigational bar of every page within the oral health site. This site can stand on its own as an oral health care resource, but, if needed, the professional can always revert back to the main 'umbrella' site if the search calls for it.

Both the consumer and the professional will find current, consistently updated information and useful material readily accessible on this website in both English and Spanish.

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