

Researchers find most substance-dependent individuals report poor oral health

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A team of Boston University researchers has found that the majority of individuals with substance dependence problems report having poor oral health. They also found that opioid users, in particular, showed a decline in oral health over the period of one year. These findings appear online in the *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*.

Public health, [dental medicine](#) and internal medicine faculty from Boston University investigated the affects of different substances on oral health among a sample of substance-dependent individuals. Alcohol, stimulant, opioid and marijuana users were included. The subjects were asked to self-report their oral health status on a five-point scale ranging from poor to excellent.

Statistical analysis of the patients' reports found no significant associations between the types of substances used and oral health status. The results did show, however, that 60 percent of all subjects reported fair or poor oral health. Opioid users in the sample also exhibited worse oral health compared to one year ago.

"We found that the majority of our sample reported fair or poor oral health," said Meredith D'Amore, MPH, a researcher in the Health/care Disparities Research Program at Boston University School of Medicine and Boston Medical Center. "Thus, oral health should be considered a significant health problem among individuals with substance dependence and providers should be aware of potential oral health issues."

The researchers hope that their findings prompt more oral health interventions targeted toward individuals with substance dependence in the future. They also suggest that engaging addicts in medical care discussions may be facilitated by addressing [oral health](#) concerns.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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