

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Special Smiles



Special Olympics
Health
FOUNDATION
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Special Smiles is the dental health discipline of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® that provides athletes with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to take charge of their oral health. Special Smiles provides comprehensive oral health care information, offers free dental screenings and instructions on correct brushing and flossing techniques to Special Olympics athletes. This also includes issuing preventative supplies, like toothpaste, toothbrushes and fluoride varnish.

Importance and Impact

Special Smiles examinations have found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes in the U.S. are unaware of the condition of their oral health.

- **47%** have gingival signs
- **25%** have untreated tooth decay
- **9%** received an urgent dental referral
- **12%** have mouth pain

Purpose of the Screening:

Special Smiles is an event designed to:

- Increase access to dental care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as people with intellectual disabilities.
- Raise dental professionals' awareness of the oral health concerns of people with special needs, including difficulties involved in accessing care.
- Develop a body of knowledge about the oral health care needs of children and adults with disabilities.
- Provide a list of regional dental professionals who care for people with special needs to all athletes who participate in Special Smiles.

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