



ORAL HEALTH FOR OLDER ADULTS

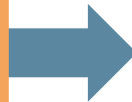
Older adults, especially those aged 65 and up, face special challenges with oral health. It's important to be aware of these challenges and know what you can do to maintain optimal oral health as you age.

COMMON ORAL HEALTH ISSUES

WITH PREVENTIVE MEASURES



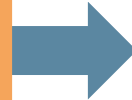
60% of adults aged 65 and older have gum disease. Untreated gum disease can lead to tooth loss, inflammation, and infection, and can strain the immune system's ability to respond to other health issues.



Good oral hygiene practice and regular dental cleanings and checkups can help prevent these outcomes. Older adults should visit their dentist twice a year or more often, as recommended by their provider.



Gums can get loose and pull away from the teeth as you age, exposing part of the root of the tooth. The exposed root does not have the protection of enamel, which makes it more vulnerable to tooth decay and increased sensitivity.



Using a soft-bristled electric toothbrush and fluoride treatments can help protect against tooth decay. There are a variety of toothbrushes designed for older adults, including some with wide, textured grips or toothbrushes that fit over the finger.



Dry mouth, also called xerostomia, can be a side effect of many medications. The resulting reduced saliva also greatly increases the risk of gum disease and tooth decay.



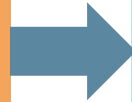
Limiting tobacco, alcohol, and caffeinated beverages, staying hydrated, using sugarless gum or sugar-free hard candy, as well as over-the-counter artificial saliva products can all help promote saliva production and reduce these risks.

COMMON ORAL HEALTH ISSUES

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Adults aged 65 and older, and especially those over age 75, have a high risk of tooth loss. Reduced chewing ability due to tooth loss or ill-fitting dentures can lead to poor nutrition. Tooth loss can also lead to difficulties with speech, self-esteem, and quality of life.



Good oral hygiene can reduce the risk of tooth loss. People with full dentures should still visit their dentist for check-ups, routine oral cancer screenings, and adjustments to help ensure a good fit for dentures.



Most oral cancer is diagnosed in older adults. Look out for sores in the mouth that do not heal within 14 days, or any pain or numbness in the face or mouth.



Look in the bathroom mirror routinely to check your tongue, palate, inner cheeks, throat, and the floor of your mouth for lumps, bumps, or discoloration.



Promoting a lifetime of oral health

Understanding the challenges to maintaining oral health throughout the lifespan and taking steps to protect oral health as you age can promote overall wellbeing and health at every stage.

