

# SENIORS AND ORAL HEALTH

There's no escaping that time can impact our oral health. Certain oral health issues will arise as we age. It's important to note, though, that gum disease and tooth loss are NOT a part of growing older. They are preventable. This fact makes regular visits to your dentist very important. Good oral care may help you live a healthier life for years to come.<sup>1,2</sup>

## DID YOU KNOW?

PEOPLE 85 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER ARE THE FASTEST GROWING SEGMENT OF THE U.S. POPULATION.<sup>3</sup>



**ABOUT 75%** OF PEOPLE 60 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER HAVE ONLY SOME OF THEIR NATURAL TEETH<sup>4</sup>

**NEARLY 1 IN 4** ADULTS 65 TO 74 YEARS OF AGE HAVE SEVERE GUM DISEASE<sup>4</sup>

**30%** OF OLDER ADULTS HAVE PROBLEMS WITH DRY MOUTH CAUSED BY THE PRESCRIPTION AND OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS THEY'RE TAKING, WHICH CAN CONTRIBUTE TO TOOTH DECAY AND GUM DISEASE<sup>4</sup>

The good news is that people are living longer than ever.<sup>3</sup> Here are some tips to help make sure quality of life isn't impacted by oral health issues as we age:



**Reconsider how you brush.** In addition to continuing to brush twice a day, you may also benefit from using a toothbrush with soft bristles or an electric toothbrush. Be sure to floss every day and rinse with mouthwash twice daily. As an older adult, you will find that rinsing can help prompt the production of saliva in your mouth, which is crucial to limiting bacteria and keeping gums healthy.<sup>1,5</sup>



**If you wear dentures, clean them daily.** If you wear dentures, it's important to brush the dentures each day to remove food deposits and plaque. This should be done with a soft-bristled brush and a denture cleaner, as well as placing them in a dentist-recommended soaking solution at night.<sup>6,7</sup>



**If needed, have a caregiver assist you.** As we get older, stiffness in our hands or other motion problems can make it more difficult to efficiently clean your teeth. This increases the risk for tooth decay and gum disease. If you are having difficulty brushing your teeth, a dental professional can provide helpful tips or a different approach.<sup>8</sup>

For more information and resources on managing oral care in seniors, visit [mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/a/aging-and-dental-health](http://mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/a/aging-and-dental-health)

Seniors can use ADA-accepted LISTERINE® mouthwash along with brushing and flossing to help freshen breath and reduce plaque and gingivitis.<sup>9</sup>

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**References:** 1. Mouth Healthy. Aging and dental health. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/a/aging-and-dental-health>. Accessed May 2, 2017. 2. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Older adults and oral health. <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/OralHealthInformation/OlderAdults/>. Accessed May 2, 2017. 3. National Institute on Aging. Living long & well in the 21st century: strategic directions for research on aging. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/about/living-long-well-21st-century-strategic-directions-research-aging/introduction>. Accessed May 2, 2017. 4. Washington Dental Service Foundation. Seniors oral health. [http://seniorsoralhealth.org/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1493780268.2393848896026611328125](http://seniorsoralhealth.org/?doing_wp_cron=1493780268.2393848896026611328125). Accessed May 2, 2017. 5. Managed health care connect. New guidelines support fluoride mouthwash for reducing tooth decay in elderly long-term care residents. <http://www.managedhealthcareconnect.com/news/fluoride-rinse-elderly-american-dental-association-guidelines>. Accessed May 2, 2017. 6. Mouth Healthy. Dentures. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/d/dentures>. Accessed May 2, 2017. 7. Mouth Healthy. Removable partial dentures. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/d/dentures-partial>. Accessed May 2, 2017. 8. Tooth Wisdom. Caring for a senior's smile. <http://www.toothwisdom.org/resources/entry/caring-for-a-seniors-smile>. Accessed May 2, 2017. 9. Senior Oral Health. Oral health care concerns preventive guidelines & techniques for seniors and caregivers. United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona. 2005:1-36.