

Geriatric Dental Care

In addition to the unique dental needs and challenges of senior adults, there is a vital connection between a healthy body and a healthy mouth. If you want to feel good, stay healthy, and look great throughout life, you might be surprised what a difference a healthy mouth makes. By adopting healthy oral habits at home, making smart choices about diet and lifestyle, and seeking regular dental care, you can help your teeth last a lifetime.

Tips for Taking Care of Your Teeth and Visiting the Dentist

Brushing and Cleaning

Brushing and flossing your teeth is just as important now as it was when you were a youngster. Brush your teeth twice a day with a product featuring the ADA Seal of Acceptance. Choose a toothbrush with soft bristles. If you have limited ability to move your shoulders, arms or hands, you may benefit from using an electric toothbrush. Replace your toothbrush every three or four months, or sooner if the bristles become frayed. A worn toothbrush will not do a good job of cleaning your teeth. Clean between teeth daily with floss or other interdental cleaners such as picks or brushes.

Dentures

Bacteria stick to your teeth and also to full or partial dentures. If you wear dentures, remember to clean them on a daily basis. Take your dentures out of your mouth for at least four hours every day. It's best to remove your dentures at night. To stay healthy, the lining of your mouth needs to rejuvenate after prolonged contact with dentures. Your dentist will provide you with instructions about how long your dentures may be worn each day. Use denture cleaning products like denture cleansers and overnight soaking solutions to help keep dentures fresh and clean.

Water

Consuming optimally fluoridated water throughout life helps prevent tooth decay no matter how old you are. If you choose bottled water, check the label for fluoride content. Talk to your dentist about what is best for you.

Quit Smoking

Smoking increases problems with gum disease, tooth decay, and tooth loss. It also affects healing after dental procedures and the retention of dental implants. There are tobacco cessation programs, over-the-counter products, and prescription medications that your dentist may prescribe or recommend that can help you quit smoking.

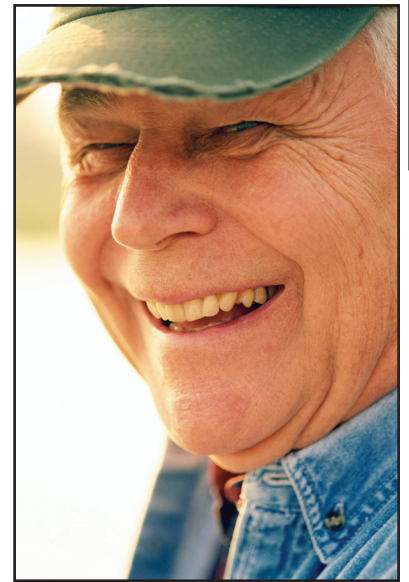
Visiting the Dentist

Visit your dentist regularly for a complete dental check up. Your dentist can help evaluate problems that medications may create for your mouth. To get the most out of your dental visit, please bring the following items to your dental checkup:

- An up-to-date list of your medications including vitamin supplements
- An up-to-date list of your medical conditions and allergies
- Information about your health care providers, including all of your doctors and their phone numbers
- Information about your emergency contact(s)
- Dental insurance or Medicaid card(s)
- Dentures (full or partials)—even if you aren't currently wearing them

Mouth/Body Connection

Bleeding gums, visible root surfaces, and loose teeth are not normal at any age. These are usually signs of an infection called periodontal (gum) disease. Periodontal infections can be serious and can affect not only the mouth, but potentially your overall health. Likewise, increasing medical evidence suggests that an unhealthy mouth may worsen serious medical problems, like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.



According to the U.S. Administration on Aging, the population of Americans older than 65 years is expected to double to about 71 million by 2040. What's more, the population of Americans older than 85 years is expected to increase to 9.6 million by 2030.