

Oral Health for Older Adults

Older adults experience health issues that can affect oral health and have an affect on overall health and well-being. Even with good home care, you may face certain issues that affect your oral health.

Tooth sensitivity can increase with age. When gums recede, the roots of teeth are exposed. These areas can be very sensitive to hot and cold foods and drinks. Sensitivity toothpastes and prescription fluoride can help with discomfort. If the problem persists, check with your dentist to be sure a more serious problem does not exist.

Cavities can also occur on exposed root surfaces. This is especially common with seniors. Fluoride toothpaste, daily flossing, and regular checkups are vital. Professionally-applied fluoride varnish applications are also effective in reducing tooth and root decay.

Dry mouth (xerostomia) may be caused by medications or certain medical conditions. Left untreated, dry mouth can damage your teeth, lead to oral yeast infections, create difficulty in eating, and cause pain. Be sure to check with your dentist for ways to help with the dryness in your mouth.

Existing health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, or cancer can affect your oral health. Gum disease can complicate these medical conditions. It is very important that you have good home care and see your dental provider for professional cleanings.

Gum disease, a problem at any age, is especially prevalent in people over 40. Factors that increase the severity of gum disease include:

- Poor oral hygiene
- Diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer
- Environmental factors such as stress and smoking
- Certain medications that influence oral conditions
- Poor diet



Older adults can keep their healthy smiles with proper care and regular checkups.

Dentures require special care. Annual checkups with your dentist are important to avoid problems.

Crown and bridge work are common restorations for older adults. Since decay can occur under crowns and bridges on the root surfaces of teeth, good home care, fluoride toothpaste, and regular dental visits are important.

Implants are becoming more common. They require thorough home care to maintain the health of the gum tissue and supporting bone structure.

With proper brushing with fluoride toothpaste, daily flossing, and regular dental visits, you can keep your teeth for a lifetime!