



Neering retirement or relaxing after years of hard work—that’s something to smile about. But how should you care for your smile during this new stage of life?

OTHER TOPICS IN THIS
SERIES INCLUDE:

- Oral Health and Your Overall Well-Being*
- Preventive Oral Care for Everyone*
- Oral Health: Infant to Teen*
- Your Oral Health and Diabetes*
- Your Oral Health and Heart Disease*
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- The Seven Eating Habits of Healthy Smiles*

Oral Health

SENIOR SMILES



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Healthy smiles for life

With all the new opportunities available to you, you have a lot to smile about. Fortunately, maintaining

Tooth loss is not a normal part of aging.

good oral care and regular dental check-ups can keep you smiling through retirement.

Unfortunately, many people write off oral pain as “nothing.”

But, toothaches and mouth pain can signal tooth decay or other serious oral problems. The good news? Most oral health problems are *preventable*. Good oral care can prevent suffering, save you money and keep you doing what you love.¹

What should I look for?

Periodontal (Gum) Disease

Periodontal disease can begin anytime, but it often appears with age. In fact, 3 out of 4 adults over the age of 35 have some type of periodontal disease.² If left untreated, tooth loss can result. If you experience symptoms such as red, swollen or tender gums; bleeding while brushing or flossing; or gums that pull away from the teeth, tell your dentist immediately.

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth occurs when salivary glands don't work properly because of certain diseases, medications, cancer treatment or simply because of age. Saliva is necessary to help rinse the mouth of bacteria and acid that attack the hard outer covering of the teeth—the enamel. Dry mouth can lead to periodontal disease and cavities, and impact your

overall lifestyle by hindering your ability to speak, swallow, taste and speak.

If you suffer from dry mouth, your dentist can help you find a treatment. Drinking lots of water and staying away from sweets, tobacco, alcohol and caffeine may also help.



Oral Cancer

Oral cancer occurs most often in people over the age of 40 and can be difficult for people to detect in its early stages.³ Be sure to let your dentist know right away if you see any red or white patches on the gums or tongue, have sores that don't heal within 2 weeks or have unusual spots in the mouth. Your dentist can also conduct regular oral cancer screens, making regular dental check-ups even more important to your health.

Oral care for every smile

No matter what your situation, good oral care is necessary for a bright smile and good oral and overall health.

Certain medical conditions, such as arthritis, can make it difficult to maintain good oral care. Your dentist can help make brushing and flossing easier and less painful.

People with dentures may think they don't need dental check-ups, which couldn't be farther from

the truth: Regular dental visits ensure that dentures and other dental work are functioning properly and that you're free from conditions like oral cancer and periodontal disease (that can occur regardless of whether you have all your teeth!).

What can I do?

1. Brush as often as your dentist recommends (most people brush at least twice a day).
2. Floss daily.
3. Maintain a healthy diet.
4. Visit your dentist regularly.

Need another reason to visit your dentist and maintain good oral care? Growing research suggests a link between chronic oral infection and various medical conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, respiratory disease and stroke.⁴ Your oral health involves much more than your teeth and gums—it's essential to your general health and well-being.



Additional related information can be found on the Web sites of the Academy of General Dentistry, www.agd.org and the American Dental Association, www.ada.org; and in Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2000.

1. *Oral Health in America: The Oral Health America Grading Project*, 2003.
2. *JADA*, Vol. 133, 2002.
3. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, 2005.
4. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2000.