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## Maintaining Oral Health as You Age: Dental Care for Seniors

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Aging affects all parts of the body, including your teeth and gums. As you get older, you may be more susceptible to oral health problems like tooth decay, gum disease, dry mouth, and oral cancer. Maintaining good oral hygiene and visiting the dentist regularly is essential for preserving your dental health as a senior. This article provides tips for keeping your mouth healthy as you enter your golden years.

### Brush and Floss Thoroughly

Brushing and flossing are the cornerstones of good oral hygiene at any age. As you get older, it becomes even more vital to clean your teeth and gums effectively each day to prevent plaque buildup and tooth decay.

- Brush your teeth twice per day for at least two minutes using a soft-bristled toothbrush. Make sure to brush all surfaces – front, back, top, and bottom.
- Floss once per day to remove food particles and plaque from between teeth and below the gum line. Improper flossing can cause gum recession over time.
- If you have dexterity issues that make brushing and flossing difficult, use adaptive devices like electric toothbrushes or floss holders. Your dentist can recommend options.

### Watch Out for Dry Mouth

Saliva helps neutralize acids and wash away food debris in your mouth. As you age, you may develop dry mouth (known as [xerostomia](#)) due to medications, health conditions, or changes in salivary gland function. Dry mouth leaves you prone to cavities, so take these precautions:

- Drink plenty of water and avoid sugary or acidic beverages.
- Chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow.
- Use a saliva substitute if needed.
- Have your doctor adjust medications that cause dry mouth, if possible.

### Maintain Regular Dental Checkups

Experts recommend seniors visit the dentist **every 6 months** for a professional cleaning and oral exam. During your appointment, your dentist will:

- Check for tooth decay, gum disease, oral cancer, and other problems.
- Remove built-up tartar above and below the gumline.

- Take X-rays to detect issues between teeth.
- Assess the health of existing dental work like fillings and dentures.

Routine exams allow early detection and treatment of dental disease, before it becomes advanced or irreversible. Be sure to discuss any medications, health changes, or oral symptoms with your dentist as well.

## Watch What You Eat and Drink

Your diet impacts the health of your teeth and gums at any age. Follow these nutritional guidelines to support your oral health:

- Eat crunchy fruits and vegetables like apples, carrots, and celery to help clean teeth.
- Choose dairy products to get calcium and vitamin D for tooth enamel.
- Drink green or black tea, which contains antioxidants that may reduce cavities and gum disease.
- Limit sugary or acidic foods and drinks that can erode tooth enamel.

Avoiding excess sugar and staying hydrated with water is especially important if you have a dry mouth. Proper nutrition provides vitamins and minerals essential for healthy gums too. A [home care provider in Thousand Oaks, CA](#), can help prepare meals if you're unable to do so yourself.

## Stop Tobacco Use

Smoking or chewing tobacco substantially increases your risk for gum disease, oral cancer, and tooth loss. Tobacco use makes routine dental care like cleanings less effective as well. Quitting is the best thing you can do for your oral and overall health. Ask your doctor about quit-smoking programs or nicotine replacement products.

## Rely on Others for Support if Needed

If your physical or cognitive abilities decline, you may need support to maintain your oral care routine. Don't be afraid to ask family members or your home care provider for help brushing, flossing, and making dental appointments. Having assistance ensures you don't miss vital oral hygiene that preserves your dental health.

With proper daily care, routine dental visits, and healthy lifestyle habits, your teeth and gums can stay healthy well into your golden years. Don't neglect your oral health – a sparkling smile and pain-free mouth make for a higher quality of life as a senior.

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