

# PROTECT SENIORS' DENTAL HEALTH

CAREGIVERS



Senior Dental Health

## The Importance of Senior Dental Health

*Dental care is about more than cosmetics. Dental health affects overall health. As a result, it's important for seniors to take care of their oral health.*

Oftentimes seniors think that dental care is no longer necessary, especially if they are using dentures. However, dental health is important to manage throughout the aging process.

Taking care of dental health while aging is essential. Help seniors manage their oral care by understanding the risks, complications, and needs they face.

### Common Dental Challenges Aging Adults Face

While people of all ages are at risk of dental issues like cavities, there are several conditions that seniors are more susceptible to. Common dental challenges people face while aging include:

#### Dry Mouth

A condition in which the mouth doesn't produce enough saliva, dry mouth affects the acid levels in the mouth. This can affect swallowing, digestion, and the teeth and gums negatively. Seniors are especially prone to this condition, especially if their medications list dry mouth as a possible side effect.

#### Root and Coronal Caries

The decay of the teeth, basic dental caries are often just called cavities. The decay can affect the roots of the tooth and the jawbone as well. Caries can be caused by poor oral hygiene, a poor diet, dry mouth, and more.

#### Periodontitis

Periodontitis is a gum infection and can cause inflammation and pain. It is often caused by poor oral hygiene or a buildup of bacteria in the mouth.

[\(American Dental Association\)](#)

### 9 Reasons Dental Health Care Matters

1. Heart disease can be linked to gum disease
2. Poor oral hygiene can contribute to pneumonia
3. Periodontitis can exacerbate diabetes
4. Teeth darken without proper care
5. Gum disease can lead to tooth loss
6. Dry mouth poses digestive issues
7. Root decay can be painful
8. Teeth can move if others are lost and not replaced
9. Ill-fitting dentures can be painful and unhealthy

[\(A Place for Mom\)](#)

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## Best Tips for Managing Senior Oral Care

Most dental health problems seniors face are preventable with the right care. Unfortunately, there are many reasons that seniors do not maintain their oral health effectively. Common causes of poor oral hygiene among seniors include:

- Decreased mobility
- Impaired memory
- Side effects of medication
- Medical conditions that affect oral health

The best way to protect seniors' dental health is to help them manage their oral care.

Caregivers can help in various ways. Caregivers might:

- Help with brushing or flossing
- Set reminders to brush or floss
- Encourage seniors to use mouthwash
- Schedule regular dental cleanings
- Offer transportation to the dentist
- Urge seniors to talk to their doctor if medications are causing dry mouth

Simple strategies like these can help seniors avoid dental health problems. This can enable seniors to keep their natural teeth longer and to enjoy regular diets instead of having to switch to soft food due to tooth decay.

### The Link Between Meds and Cavities

Did you know dry mouth is a possible side effect of over 500 medications? Check seniors' meds to see if this a side effect to watch out for.

([Mouth Healthy](#))

### Diseases That Can Affect Oral Health

Special attention should be given to the dental health of seniors with diseases like:

- Liver disease
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- Anemia
- Osteoporosis
- Autoimmune disorders

([A Place for Mom](#))



### Home Care Tip

Seniors who need dentures must practice oral hygiene too. Remind them that false teeth require care and cleaning, or they may do more harm than good.