

# There's a lot YOU can do to keep good oral health!

As we get older, we are affected by more health challenges that require special care. There are many things each of us can do to keep a healthy mouth throughout our lives.

Practicing good oral hygiene is important for people of all ages. Be sure to continue to **brush daily** with a fluoride toothpaste and floss regularly<sup>1</sup>.

Taking good care of your mouth will not only help your teeth stay healthy, it can help you to

communicate better with others, to enjoy the foods you love, and to feel good about your smile — for life.



## There are many places to find more information about oral health factors in older adults.

American Dental Association

[www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)

American Society on Aging

[www.asaging.org](http://www.asaging.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/oralhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth)

Nebraska Office of Oral Health

[www.dhhs.ne.gov/healthysmiles](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/healthysmiles)

Always consult your personal doctor and dentist about health questions.

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## Watch Your Mouth!

## A Healthy Smile For Life

## Oral Health in Older Adults



## Healthy Smiles for a Healthy Future

- 1 "Oral Health in Older Americans," CDC Fact Sheet and FAQ, December 2006, [http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/factsheets/adult\\_older.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/factsheets/adult_older.htm)
- 2 Vargas, Kramarow, Yellowitz. "The Oral Health of Older Americans," Aging Trends, No. 3. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2001.
- 3 Mayo Clinic, <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/oral-and-throat-cancer/DS00349>
- 4 CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Dec. 19, 2003
- 5 American Dental Association FAQ, <http://www.ada.org/2996.aspx>

**Older adults** make up a fast-growing population in the United States. The number of people over 65 is expected to increase by almost 25 percent by 2050<sup>1</sup>.

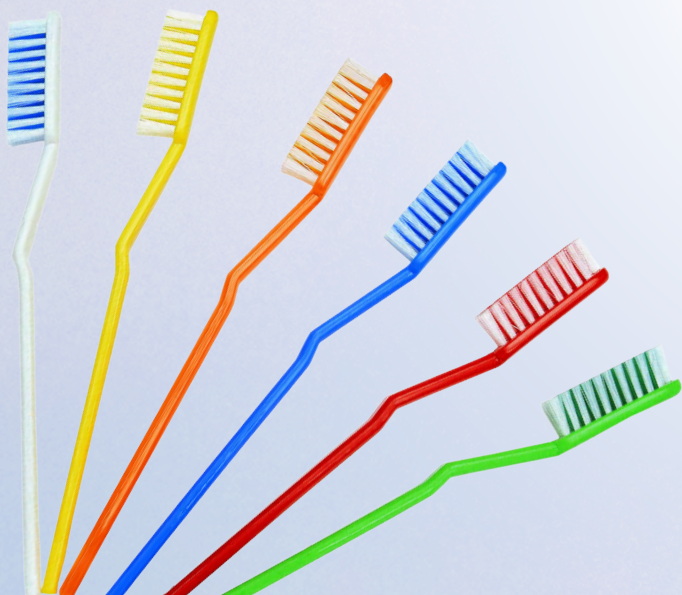
As you get older, conditions in your mouth may change, making it important for you to pay close attention to your oral health.

## Higher risk for gum disease.

According to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, about 23 percent of people between ages 65-74 have severe gum disease<sup>1</sup>.

Gums also recede as you get older, and this can lead to tooth loss<sup>5</sup>. Receding gums can cause pain when talking or eating, and can make you less confident in your appearance.

Continue to brush and floss regularly, and to see a dentist at least once a year.



## Higher risk for oral cancer.

Older adults are the group of people most affected by oral and throat cancer, and the results can be very serious. About half of the 8,000 deaths caused by oral cancer each year occur in people 65 or older<sup>2</sup>.

Combined use of tobacco and alcohol is the biggest risk factor for oral and throat cancers<sup>3</sup> so avoid tobacco use and limit alcohol consumption.

## Medications can dry your mouth.

Many older adults take medications to help them stay healthy. Unfortunately, many medications can have poor effects on oral health.

Many common prescription and over-the-counter medications can cause dry mouth<sup>1</sup>. Saliva helps wash away food particles and harmful bacteria.

You can talk to your doctor about switching to medications which won't cause dry mouth. If you cannot switch, be sure to drink plenty of water, chew sugarless gum, and avoid alcohol and tobacco<sup>1</sup>.

## Adventures with dentures!

More older adults still have their natural teeth than ever before, but dentures are still very common<sup>4</sup>.

Just like your natural teeth, dentures should be cleaned every day. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and a denture cleaner approved by the American Dental Association.

To keep your dentures from drying out, soak them overnight in water or a denture solution, but DON'T use hot water – it could warp your dentures<sup>5</sup>.

