

Seniors

Dental health is important for seniors

We can all notice the effects of aging. The graying of hair and aches and pains we did not have before. Our mouth is also affected by advancing age, and understanding these changes is important to maintaining good oral health.

The number of older adults that have some or all of their natural teeth is steadily increasing. It is not uncommon to find the average 70-year-old with all of his or her own natural teeth. This is largely due to the preventive dental benefits of daily brushing and flossing and regular professional dental visits introduced in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Three out of four adults have some form of gum disease. The bacteria found in everyone's mouth thrive on the sugars and starches in the foods that we eat. If thorough brushing, flossing and regular professional cleanings are not taking place, the oral bacteria create toxins that irritate the gums and slowly and often without pain, the gums detach from the teeth. If gum disease is left untreated the teeth can become loose and eventually must be removed.

Sometimes older adults may experience their mouths being very dry. This condition is often due to various medications an individual may be taking for an existing health condition. There are a number of products available in the drug store that can help soothe a dry mouth. Home remedies include frequent sips of water or chewing sugarless gum which will help improve the discomfort caused by xerostomia (dry mouth). Dry mouth increases the risk of dental cavities and gum disease so be sure to discuss your needs with your dental professional.

Some older adults have complete dentures or partial dentures and natural teeth. It is important to have dentures checked and maintained regularly. It is also important for denture wearers to have regular mouth checkups to make sure there are no cancerous sores present. Your name on your denture (engraved by a dentist or dentist) is a good idea.

For more information on oral health, contact the Halton Regional Health Department from Acton (519) 853-0501 or Georgetown (905) 878-8113.



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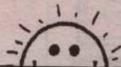
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