

# ORAL HEALTH FOR SENIORS

## How should I care for my dentures?

- Dentures (full or partial) need to be cleaned daily with a soft toothbrush or denture brush. A commercial denture cleaner can be used as well as hand soap or baking soda. Brush both the inside and outside of the dentures and rinse with cool water.
- At bedtime, remove your dentures and store them in water or a denture cleaning solution to prevent damage.
- Brush and floss regularly between remaining teeth.

## How can I care for my teeth and gums if I have arthritis?

Many seniors experience arthritis that makes everyday functions difficult and painful. Sometimes even brushing and flossing can be difficult for seniors with limited mobility due to arthritis or other conditions. Here are some ways to make brushing and flossing easier if you have arthritis:

- Attach the toothbrush to a larger object such as a ball, ruler, tongue depressor, sponge or bicycle handle grip;
- Purchase an electric toothbrush, it does the work for you and is easy to hold;
- Have someone bend the toothbrush handle to make it more comfortable to hold;
- Use a floss holder to help guide the floss in between teeth.

## My mouth is always dry, what can I do?

Some seniors experience chronic dry mouth, which may be the result of certain medications. Be sure to talk with your dentist or doctor if you have persistent dry mouth. Here are some suggestions for keeping your mouth moist:

- Drink plenty of water and stay away from sugary foods, caffeinated drinks, alcohol and tobacco
- Suck on sugar-free hard candy, mints or chew sugar-free gum
- Use commercial artificial saliva which is available at drug stores

## BRUSHING TIPS

Always use a soft-bristled toothbrush.

Replace your toothbrush every three months.

Never share a toothbrush, it spreads germs.

### How to Brush

- Place the toothbrush against the gum line at a 45-degree angle. Use a small circular motion to brush your teeth and gums.



- Brush back and forth on the chewing surfaces of your teeth holding the brush flat.



- Brush the back of your teeth.
- Brush your tongue! This will freshen your breath and remove germs.
- Brush for at least three minutes, two times a day. Be sure to brush at bedtime to remove bacteria that can cause decay while you are sleeping.



## CHECKLIST

Tell your dentist what medical conditions you have and what medicines you take.

If you take blood thinning medications, speak with your dentist and physician before your appointment.

## FLOSSING TIPS

Flossing cleans between the teeth where a toothbrush can't reach.

Flossing helps control bad breath.

### How to Floss

- Wrap about 18 inches of floss around the middle fingers. Gently slide the floss between the teeth (don't snap the floss into the gums).



- As the floss reaches the gum line, make a C-shape around the tooth until you feel pressure against your tooth.



- Gently scrape the tooth surface with the floss.



- Move the floss as it becomes soiled and repeat the process for each tooth.



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