

Oral Health Guide for Older Adults

Thank you for everything you do to support oral health for older adults. To help you in this role, we've provided the following fact sheets for your use.

By using the first two sheets in your office, you can remind your staff how they can help older adults care for their oral health. By handing out the last two sheets to older adults, you can help them learn more about the importance of caring for their teeth and gums.

With your help, we can continue to ensure older adults have access to essential oral health services and more.

Thanks again for everything you do for older adults!

This project was supported in part by grant number 90PPNU0002 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

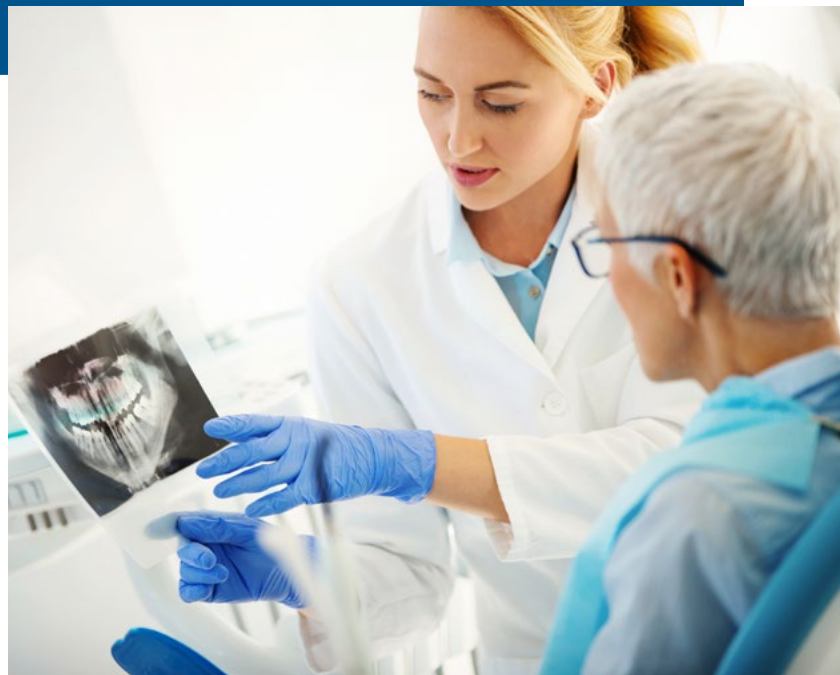
Sources:

Relationship of Oral Health and Nutrition ([2. Oral Health Tips Sheets for Providers and Consumer](#): Relationship of Oral Health and Nutrition)

Build the Foundation Today ([2. Oral Health Tips Sheets for Providers and Consumer](#): Oral Health and Older Adults)

Delight in Every Bite ([2. Oral Health Tips Sheets for Providers and Consumer](#): Diet, Nutrition, and Oral Health)

Resources to Help Maintain Good Oral Health ([2. Oral Health Tips Sheets for Providers and Consumer](#): Resources to Help Maintain Good Oral Health)





Relationship of Oral Health and Nutrition:

- 96 percent of all adults, 65 years and older, have had a cavity.
- 2 in 3 adults, 65 years and older, have gum disease.
- 1 in 5 adults have lost all of their teeth.
- 85 percent of older adults have at least one chronic health condition.
- 60 percent of older adults have at least two chronic health conditions.
- 1 in 5 adults have untreated tooth decay.
- Adults with chronic diseases — arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) — may be more likely to develop gum disease.
- Some medications may cause dry mouth by reducing saliva, which may lead to an increased risk of cavities.



PROMOTE ORAL HEALTH BY ENCOURAGING ADULTS TO EAT THE FOLLOWING:

- Calcium-rich foods, such as low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy milk, promote strong teeth and bones.
- Phosphorus is a mineral essential for strong teeth and is found in eggs, fish, lean meat, dairy, nuts, and beans.
- Vitamin C promotes gum health and is found in citrus fruits, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, potatoes, and spinach.

Build the foundation today!

Aging does not mean having poor oral health and tooth loss.

SIMPLE STEPS TO ENSURE ORAL HEALTH IN OLDER ADULTS:

- Brush teeth thoroughly twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss once a day to remove plaque.
- Drink fluoridated water, if available.
- Do not smoke or use tobacco products.
- Eat a balanced diet with fruits and vegetables.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks.
- Limit alcohol.
- If you have diabetes, work to maintain control of your blood sugars.
- If medication causes dry mouth, ask your doctor for a different medication that may not cause dry mouth.
- If dry mouth cannot be avoided, drink plenty of water, chew sugarless gum, and avoid tobacco products and alcohol.
- Consider using an electric toothbrush to make it easier to brush teeth.
- Visit the dentist at least once a year — regardless of whether you have teeth or dentures.



Delight in Every Bite

Diet, nutrition, and oral health all impact each other. Diet can affect teeth and the tissue of the mouth and gums, which then impacts the foods and nutrients one can eat.



TIPS FOR GOOD ORAL HEALTH:

- Consume a balanced diet (fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and low-fat or fat-free dairy).
- Resist the urge to snack or sip on sugary treats or drinks.
- Snack wisely — make nutritious choices, such as vegetables, fruits, low-fat or fat-free yogurt, unsalted nuts, or whole-grain crackers.
- Enjoy calcium-rich foods, such as low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese, tofu, canned salmon, almonds, and dark green leafy vegetables.
- Get plenty of vitamin C, which promotes gum health, such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, potatoes, and spinach.
- Drink plenty of water, with fluoride (if possible), and limit alcohol consumption.

Resources to Maintain Good Oral Health

Good oral hygiene, a healthy lifestyle, and regular dental checkups are essential steps to a healthy mouth. Dental and oral procedures should not be delayed or avoided due to the inability to pay. The following can provide options to help overcome barriers to accessing and paying for dental and oral health care:

AGING NETWORK

Organizations and committed advocates working to support older adults and people with disabilities. Visit the [Eldercare Locator](#) website or call 1-800-677-1116.

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Some organizations provide access to health and dental care for those in need.

MEDICAID

A state-run program that provides medical benefits and, in some cases, dental benefits. Visit [Medicaid & You](#) for more.

STATE AND LOCAL RESOURCES

State and local health departments may know of additional programs that offer free or low-cost dental care.

DENTAL SCHOOLS

A good source of quality, low-cost dental care where students gain experience by providing care to patients for a reduced fee. Search for a [dental school](#).

MEDICARE

Serves those 65 and older as well as individuals of any age with disabilities. It only covers dental services related to specific medical conditions or treatments. Visit [Medicare Dental Services](#) or call Medicare at 1-800-633-4227.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINICS (CHCs)

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funds CHCs that care for older adults when adults cannot pay for health services. Locate a [community health clinic](#).

DENTAL HYGIENE SCHOOLS

Offering supervised, low-cost preventative dental care from students training to be dental hygienists. Go to the [American Dental Hygienists' Association](#) website.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION (VA)

Dental care is offered to eligible veterans at over 200 locations across the country. Visit the [VA Dental Clinic](#) to search by city, state, or postal code.