



## Seniors and Oral Health

Older adults may have dental concerns that can't be taken care of with just brushing, flossing and regular cleanings.<sup>1</sup> Your dentist may have talked with you about a few of the following dental health issues that arise later in life and the importance of keeping up with healthy oral habits you learned a long time ago.

### How to care for dentures

Dentures may make your mouth less sensitive to hot foods and liquids. They may also make it more difficult to notice bones or other harmful objects in your food.<sup>1</sup>

Dentures need to be kept clean and free of food particles to keep your mouth healthy and to prevent discoloration. According to the American Dental Association, you should take care of your dentures as you would natural teeth. Brush daily and visit your dentist regularly. When you go to sleep, remove your dentures and put them in water or a denture-cleaning liquid. Partial dentures should be cared for in the same way.<sup>1</sup>

### Dry mouth in older adults

Dry mouth occurs when the salivary glands do not make enough saliva. You may have difficulty swallowing, tasting or even speaking. Dry mouth is a common problem among older adults, but it is not a normal part of aging. Many medications and certain medical conditions can cause it, including diabetes, Sjögren's and Parkinson's disease.<sup>1</sup>

### Keep up old oral health habits

The problems your dentist warned you about as a child should still concern you. Cavities and gum disease are things to watch for throughout your life. To protect against these lifelong concerns, keep up these good dental habits:<sup>1</sup>

- Brush your teeth gently at least twice a day and floss at least daily.
- Drink fluoridated water and use fluoride toothpaste.
- Visit your dentist regularly.
- Avoid tobacco.

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Maintaining your oral health is a lifetime commitment. Keep your teeth and gums in shape by continuing good dental care into your later years.

<sup>1</sup>"Older Adults: Don't Brush Off Dental Care", Delta Dental Plans Association, <http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/OlderAdult/OlderAdults/22,21448n>, accessed 4/2017.