



Healthy aging

Older adults: Test your mouth IQ

Clean teeth and gums give you more than a great smile. Taking care of your teeth can lower your risk of a number of health problems, including heart disease. That's why it's especially important to have good oral care habits as you age.

How much do you know about taking care of your teeth? Take this quiz to find out.

True or False:

1. About 25 percent of adults 65 and older haven't seen the dentist in the past five years.
2. You should replace your toothbrush every six months.
3. Loose teeth could be a sign of gum disease.
4. You should spend two to three minutes brushing your teeth.
5. You don't need to floss if you brush twice a day.
6. Use mild dish soap to brush dentures each day.

Answers: 1. True. 2. False. 3. True. 4. True. 5. False. 6. True.

Sources: American Dental Association, Wellsource/Momentum Health Shelf

Don't brush off dental care in your golden years

As you age, your dental concerns will be different than when you were younger. Here are three common issues you may experience:

Dentures may make you less sensitive to hot foods and may make it more difficult to notice bones in your food. To keep your mouth healthy, have your dentist show you how to clean them and wear them properly.

Dry mouth is common, but it isn't a normal part of aging. Medications may cause dry mouth. So may some medical conditions, like diabetes or Parkinson's disease. If you think you have dry mouth, ask your dentist how to treat it.

Gum disease affects the gums and the bones that hold your teeth in place. Left untreated, it may wear away these tissues and bones. Food stuck between teeth, smoking, ill-fitting bridges and defective fillings can make it worse.

Remember, you can keep your mouth healthy at any age by practicing good dental care!

Sources: American Dental Association, CDC, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

Trivia time:

What's the most common chronic condition for seniors?

Answer: You may think cavities are child's play, but tooth decay is actually the most common chronic disease among people age 65 and older.

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