



Healthy Smiles at Every Age

Oral Health for Older Adults





Why Oral Health Matters

Your oral health (the health of your mouth) is an important part of your overall health, no matter how old you are.

- Adults age 65 and older are at higher risk for mouth diseases.
- Poor oral health is associated with certain chronic health conditions.
- Painful teeth or gums can make eating difficult. This can affect your nutrition and overall health.
- Good oral health can improve your confidence, comfort, and quality of life.





Common Oral Health Issues

Some issues that can result in poor oral health include:

- Dry mouth
- Tooth decay and loss
- Gum disease

Oral health can also be affected by certain chronic conditions, such as:

- Dementia (which can make maintaining good oral health difficult)
- Poorly controlled diabetes (which can increase the risk of gum disease and other oral infections)
- Oral cancer (which affects tissues that help maintain a healthy mouth)



Tips for Good Oral Health

- Brush twice daily with toothpaste containing fluoride.
- Clean between your teeth daily using floss or interdental brushes.
- Rinse with alcohol-free mouthwash.
- Drink water to stay hydrated.
- Avoid tobacco and limit alcohol use.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks.
- Visit your dentist every six months. Ask about denture care, prescription toothpastes, and oral cancer screening.



Frequently Asked Questions

Do I still need to see my dentist even if I don't have natural teeth?

Yes. Your dentist can also check your gums and dentures and screen for oral cancer.

Should I wear my dentures at night?

No. Before bed, take out your dentures, rinse them, and brush them gently. Ask your dentist about soaking overnight.

What if brushing is physically difficult for me?

Use a toothbrush with a larger, easy-grip handle or an electric toothbrush. Ask your dentist about other options.

How can I relieve dry mouth?

Sip water often or chew sugar-free gum. Ask your dentist or doctor about saliva substitutes, rinses, or changing your medication (which may be the cause).

What should I eat to keep my mouth healthy?

Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and more plant-based protein (such as beans and nuts) and lean animal proteins (such as chicken and fish).

Is bleeding when brushing normal?

No. Visit your dentist if your gums bleed when brushing, as it may be a sign of gum disease or other oral health issues.

Take care of your mouth. It's never too late!

For help finding a low-cost dental provider near you, or for assistance with dental insurance, call **311**.

For more information, visit **nyc.gov/adult-oral-health**.