



Oral Health and Longevity

We often focus our attention on the health of our children. But what about elderly family members who can't schedule appointments or drive to a dental office for treatment?

People are not only living longer but keeping their natural teeth longer. This has caused the dental profession to respond to their special dental treatment needs. The American Dental Association (ADA) helped launch the Oral Longevity program, a three-year campaign that targeted older Americans.

According to the ADA, along with dental caries and periodontal disease, geriatric dentistry includes oral mucosal diseases, head and neck pain, salivary dysfunction and impaired chewing, tasting and swallowing.

Older people sometimes do not realize the simple connection between dry mouth and medications they may be taking. They may not realize they can still get cavities. Denture wearers may think they no longer need dental checkups. Addressing these and more complex issues can often lead to an enhanced quality of life.

One enterprising dentist in Seattle has a mobile dental unit and visits nursing homes to treat residents. A team of dentists in North Carolina plans to provide Oral Longevity materials to fifty nursing homes and retirement communities. Educating nursing home staff about the oral health of their residents is equally important.

Older adults are more vulnerable and susceptible to disease and infection. Understanding the link between oral health and overall health is key to helping your older family members maintain a high quality of life and reduce medical incidents.



Spring Cleaning



Here are a few tips for keeping your teeth clean and healthy at an affordable price:

1. Eat raw fruits and vegetables to keep teeth clean and reduce bacteria. Replace costly soft drinks and candy with apples, broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, grapes, celery, and tomatoes. All are plentiful in season.
2. Sprouts of beans, alfalfa and oats are rich in minerals and vitamins necessary for maintaining healthy teeth. And you can sprout your own for just pennies!
3. Include calcium-rich foods in meals. Milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, tofu, oats, and beans all have calcium and build strong bones and teeth.

Did You Know?

The American Heart Association (AHA) has changed its guidelines for patients with heart conditions who are anticipating dental treatment. For years, the AHA recommended a preventive course of antibiotics prior to treatment. Bacteria entering the bloodstream during dental procedures could infect the heart's inner lining.

Scientists now think that dental treatments don't increase the general risk to certain heart patients over that of general daily activities. The new guidelines instead encourage good oral hygiene for reducing bacterial risk. To review the guidelines, visit the American Dental Association website www.ada.org and click on "A-Z Professional Topic: Infective Endocarditis."

[American Dental Association - www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)

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