



A Healthy Mouth At Any Age

(NAPSA)—A healthy mouth is an asset at any age—contributing to your general health and improving your quality of life.

“Not long ago, most people lost their teeth by middle age,” says Dr. William R. Calnon, American Dental Association (ADA) president. “Today, thanks to community water fluoridation, good dental habits and regular dental visits, more people are keeping their teeth. The ADA promotes the benefits of senior-friendly dental offices with dental staff trained to understand the special needs of the elderly.

“The ADA encourages caregivers and patients to discuss all treatment recommendations with their dentists and to ask questions to clarify anything they may not understand.”

Your Age Affects Your Teeth

Older adults might not feel pain from deep cavities because their teeth are less sensitive. More than 90 percent of seniors take at least one prescription medication daily and a common side effect is dry mouth, which can contribute to bad breath, tooth decay, mouth sores and infections. As you age, fillings, crowns and bridges can shrink and crack, letting cavities form. Having these problems corrected early will help keep the mouth healthy for many years to come.

Visiting your dentist regularly lets him or her treat tooth problems when they're manageable and check overall mouth health. This includes looking for signs of oral cancer, which in the early stages might not cause any symptoms or pain.

More than 20 percent of those 75 and older have moderate or severe gum disease, in which the gums begin to pull away from teeth, forming pockets where bac-



Seniors can benefit from regular dental checkups.

teria can grow unchecked. Regular checkups can help prevent gum disease.

Caretakers should help older adults keep regular dental visits. Little problems that go untreated can turn into big problems, even life-threatening ones, later on, such as developing a possibly life-threatening abscess. Preventing dental disease is the best approach.

Tips for Denture Wearers

If you wear dentures, it's still important to practice good oral hygiene. Every morning, brush your gums, tongue and the roof of your mouth with a soft-bristled brush before you put in your dentures. This removes bacteria and stimulates circulation, which can make your mouth feel healthy and fresh.

Your dentist will provide you with instructions about how long your dentures may be worn each day. Use denture cleansers and overnight soaking solutions to help keep dentures fresh and clean.

Tips for a Healthy Mouth

- Adopt healthy dental habits at home.
- Make smart choices about diet and lifestyle.
- Visit your dentist regularly.
- Learn more at www.ada.org.