



# spotlight on health

## Bridging The Gap Between Oral And Overall Health

(NAPSA)—Oral health is important at any age, yet we do not always make it a priority. To help, here's advice on maintaining a healthy smile for life.

**Regular dental care is critical.** A growing body of research indicates that gum disease, which affects as many as three in four Americans, is linked with the incidence of common health issues such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke. Just recently, a study in the *British Medical Journal* found that poor oral hygiene is associated with higher levels of risk of cardiovascular disease and low-grade inflammation, while researchers at New York University found that gum disease may increase the risk of cognitive dysfunction associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Have your mouth examined twice a year for signs of gum disease or infection.

"Twice-annual visits to the dentist should be just as much of a priority for adults as they are for children," said Dr. Arwinder Judge of Aspen Dental Management, Inc.

**Aging affects your mouth, gums and teeth.** "Maintaining oral health for life is critical to our overall health and well-being," said Beth Truett, president and CEO of Oral Health America. "As we age, we encounter new issues that affect our mouths, and poor oral health is linked to other significant health problems."

Receding gum tissue, which exposes the roots of the teeth and leaves them vulnerable to decay and infection, is a common problem associated with aging.

Another challenge is dry mouth—a reduction in the flow of saliva that increases the risk for oral disease. More than 400 commonly



used medications for health problems ranging from high blood pressure to depression, can cause dry mouth, so tell your dentist about any medications you take, whether prescription or over the counter.

**Good oral hygiene habits make a difference.** Brush at least twice a day to help remove food and plaque on both natural teeth and dentures and floss to remove plaque between teeth and below the gumline. Denture wearers should clean their gums to avoid plaque buildup that can irritate the tissue under dentures. Thoroughly clean dentures at night to avoid bacteria growth.

**Dentures need replacement every five to seven years.** The tissues in the mouth change over time, and bone and gum ridges shrink, which can result in ill-fitting dentures that make eating uncomfortable or downright painful. One sign that it might be time for a replacement is the overuse of denture adhesive cream—if you use more than one tube of denture cream every three weeks, your dentures may not fit properly and should be evaluated.

To learn more, visit [www.aspendental.com/smileforlife/](http://www.aspendental.com/smileforlife/).