Seniors Have A Lot To Smile About

(NAPS)—Healthy teeth and gums are an important part of overall well-being. However, as people age, they become more prone to gum disease and other oral health problems. With regular dental check-ups and proper care, your smile may never get old.

Smile, California, the Medi-Cal Dental Program's campaign to improve oral health among its members, wants seniors to know that they can see the dentist for an exam and cleaning once a year. This dental visit can help keep their gums and teeth healthy, strong and pain-free.

"Medi-Cal Dental covers routine, preventive and restorative care for more than 13.5 million members in California. In January 2018, California Senate Bill 97 restored optional adult dental benefits for members ages 21 and older with full-scope dental coverage, making it easier for eligible seniors to receive free or low-cost dental care," said Alani Jackson, Chief of the Medi-Cal Dental Services Division within the California Department of Health Care Services.

Use of the Medi-Cal dental benefit is important because, according to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately one in five seniors lives with untreated tooth decay; and about 68 percent of adults age 65 or older have gum disease.

To help keep your smile healthy and strong, the American Dental Association offers these additional tips:

Visit your dentist annually to keep your teeth and gums strong and healthy.

- See the dentist on a regular basis, even if you have dentures.
- Brush and floss, or clean your dentures, daily.
- Watch for changes in your mouth. Your risk for oral cancer increases as you age. If you see any changes in your mouth, it's important to get them checked out by a dentist or doctor.
- Talk to your dentist or doctor about dry mouth. Dry mouth can make it hard to eat, swallow, or talk. It can also lead to tooth decay or infection.
- Practice healthy habits such as eating a balanced diet, limiting sugary foods and drinks, and avoiding cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Visit SmileCalifornia.org to learn more about covered services and to find a dentist near you.