

Always make time for senior oral health care

When an older adult goes into a long-term care facility, family members and caregivers need to make sure oral hygiene is important.

Oral health is good for your overall health. It's important to:

- Maintain a healthy mouth to help you eat and sleep well.
- Remove plaque from teeth before it can enter the bloodstream to lower the risk of blood clots, hardening of the arteries, and blood sugar problems.
- Improve oral hygiene to lower the chances of getting pneumonia or dying from it.¹

Tips for caregivers:

- Always wash your hands.
- Brush and floss the patient's teeth every day.
- Dentures should be cleaned daily and removed each night.
- Help seniors avoid dry mouth. Hundreds of medications can lower the flow of saliva, increasing the risk of tooth decay.
- Check the patient's mouth for any broken teeth, sores, blisters, and lumps.

Seniors getting daily oral health care are more likely to avoid dental disease and enjoy a better quality of life.

Did you know?

10% of Americans over age 85 live in long-term care facilities.²



Quick bites

Caregivers should gather oral health histories on the older adults they help. Here are some important questions to answer:

- Does the senior wear dentures? If so, are the dentures complete or partial?
- Who is the family dentist, and what is their contact information?
- When was the senior's last dental checkup?
- Is there a track record of any dental problems?
- What medications are currently being taken?
- What are the best ways for encouraging cooperation with oral hygiene? What has worked at home for family members?



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1. Rosenblum, R, "Oral Hygiene Can Reduce the Incidence of and Death Resulting from Pneumonia and Respiratory Tract Infection," *Journal of the American Dental Association* 141, no. 9 (2010): 1117-118. 2. Administration on Aging, "Profile of Older Americans: 2015—Living Arrangements," web.