



IMPROVING ORAL HEALTH FOR AGING ADULTS



The Problem: Poor Oral Hygiene within the Geriatric Population

- Oral health contributes to general health and quality of life within the older adult population. As we age, our body becomes frail and our health begins to dissipate, and this crucial aspect of healthcare and personal hygiene tends to be neglected. It is vital to remind our beloved aging adults that maintaining their oral hygiene is a priority, especially when oral health directly impacts the rest of our body.

- **Common Causes of Senior Oral Health Problems:**
 - Lack of access to quality care due to absence of dental insurance and/or transportation
 - Bad dental hygiene
 - Diabetes
 - Heart disease
 - Pneumonia
 - Darkened teeth
 - Periodontal (gum) disease
 - Root caries (root decay)
 - Xerostomia (dry mouth)
 - Uneven jawbone
 - Denture induced stomatitis
 - Certain medications
 - And so much more...

REMEMBER -> Poor oral hygiene is detrimental to one's health and increases the risk of several health disparities!

➤ **Statistics aka “The Hardcore Facts”:**

- According to the US Census, the demographic of older adults, 65 and older, is expected to reach 98 million by the year 2060
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that many older adults do not have dental insurance due to losing their benefits upon retirement and the federal Medicare program does not cover routine dental care
- About 2 in 3 (68%) adults aged 65 years or older have gum disease
- Most older Americans take both prescription and over-the-counter drugs which can cause xerostomia or dry mouth. Reduced saliva flow increases the risk of cavities
- Nearly 1 in 5 of adults aged 65 or older have lost all their teeth. Complete tooth loss is twice as prevalent among adults aged 75 and older (26%) compared with adults aged 65-74 (13%)
- This means with most of the US population getting older, dentists will need to be prepared to properly treat and serve their aging patients

Treatment Approaches:

- **Education:** It is significant to ensure that patients are well-educated and equipped with resources for optimal oral health. By providing knowledge and supplemental information regarding signs, symptoms, and preventative methods for oral hygiene, the client will have a better understanding of how to properly take care of their oral health.

➤ **Oral Hygiene Tips for the Aging Adult:**

- Brush twice a day with soft bristled toothbrush and fluoride containing toothpaste
- Use an electric toothbrush because they are easier to use and hold for older people lacking strength
- Clean between your teeth once a day with floss
- Rinse with an antiseptic mouthwash one-two times a day
- If you wear full or partial dentures
 - they must be cleaned daily
 - removed from your mouth four hours a day (best to remove them at night)
- Watch for changes in your mouth
- Stay hydrated! Drink tap water (as it naturally consists of fluoride) and refrain from drinking anything sugary or caffeinated (as they increase your risk for dental decay)
- Quit smoking
- Eat a healthy and well-balanced meal



- Visit and schedule regular dentist appointments for check-ups, cleaning, and oral exams



➤ **Adaptive Technology – Oral Hygiene Aids:**

- Practicing proper dental care is important and should be encouraged to sustain good oral hygiene and health. However, due to certain medical conditions and health comorbidities, it can be arduous to perform dental care tasks.
- For example, a patient with arthritis in the hands and/or fingers will make brushing or flossing of the teeth difficult. So they may use a dental floss aid to assist them in this task.
- Assistive equipment can provide proper maintenance and increase one’s independence for keeping their mouth, gums, tongue, and teeth clean. They should be incorporated in their daily oral care routine for effective use.



\$22.95

Large Weighted Universal Handle



\$11.95

Easy Out Tube Squeezer



\$10.95

ASP6338 Suction Denture Brush



Philips Sonicare Easy Clean Electric Toothbrush \$44.99



\$5.95

Original FlossAid Dental Floss Holder



What Other Services Can Help You?

- **Primary Care Provider** – Physicians may examine the client’s medical history of diagnoses and/or medications to assist with mouth and tooth concerns. They may refer the patient to a dentist for further evaluation.
- **Occupational Therapist** – Oral hygiene is an important occupation under grooming and aspect of self-care. OTs play instrumental role and assess the client’s performance skills needed for oral care, which include strength, fine and gross motor skills, visual perceptual skills, sensation, and cognition. Moreover, OTs act as oral care educators and provide resources for one to become independent in this activity of daily living (ADL).

How Will This Improve Your Quality of Life?

- Upholding a proper oral hygiene regimen will significantly improve your quality of life and affect your occupational engagement by:



- **d5201 Caring for teeth** Looking after dental hygiene, such as by brushing teeth, flossing, and taking care of a dental prosthesis or orthosis.
- **d550 Eating** Carrying out the coordinated tasks and actions of eating food that has been served, bringing it to the mouth and consuming it in culturally acceptable ways, cutting or breaking food into pieces, opening bottles and cans, using eating implements, having meals, feasting or dining.
- **d5702 Maintaining one's health** Caring for oneself by being aware of the need and doing what is required to look after one's health, both to respond to risks to health and to prevent ill-health, such as by seeking assistance (professional and non-professional); following medical and other health advice; and managing risks to health

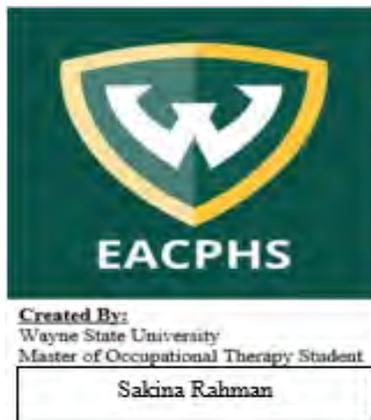
Helpful Resources:

- **Dental Lifeline Network of the American Dental Association** offers a complimentary and comprehensive dental treatment program to elderly and patients living with disabilities <https://dentallifeline.org/our-state-programs/>
- **Dentistry from the Heart** reach out to individuals who are unable to afford proper dental care. They host pro-bono community events with local dental

practitioners who offer free cleaning, extraction, and/or fillings.

<https://dentistryfromtheheart.org/>

- **Community Health Centers (CHCs)** provide health services to those with low or fixed income <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>
- **Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)** is a Medicaid or Medicare program that was established to help senior citizens with their health care needs, which includes dental care (i.e. dentures) <https://www.medicare.gov/your-medicare-costs/get-help-paying-costs/pace>
- **Dental school(s)** in your state offer low-cost cleaning and dental care to enable prospective dentists in training an opportunity to enhance their skills
- Contact your **medical insurance provider** to be aware of what oral care benefits you have access to



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