



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH &  
SENIOR SERVICES**  
Office of Dental Health

## Oral Health for Older Adults

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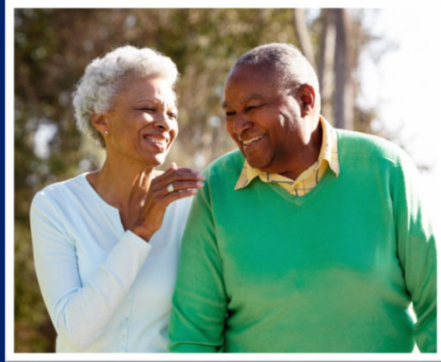


### The Oral-Systemic Connection Across the Lifespan



Pregnancy/Postpartum	Childhood	Adolescence	Young Adulthood	Middle Age	Older Adulthood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Periodontal treatment during pregnancy is linked to <b>lower risk of perinatal mortality, preterm birth, and low birth weight</b><sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early childhood caries (ECC) and its associated pain are linked to <b>negative impacts on play, school, sleeping, eating, and overall well-being</b><sup>2,3</sup></li> <li>Children with ECC face <b>significant risk of infection</b> as well as risks associated with the use of general anesthesia to treat ECC.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>E-cigarette use ("vaping"), the most common form of nicotine used by adolescents, is linked to <b>increased risk of gum disease and oral lesions</b>.<sup>4,5</sup></li> <li>Adolescents are more likely to have <b>oral injuries through school sports</b>, as well as <b>chipped teeth from oral piercings and dental decay due to increased sugar intake</b>, as they become more independent from their parents.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adolescents and young adults are at <b>greater risk for eating disorders</b>, which are linked to increased dental erosion and oral lesions.<sup>6</sup></li> <li><b>Use of tobacco and alcohol</b>, often beginning in young adulthood, increases the risk of developing oral cancer.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Periodontal disease</b>, which becomes more common in middle and older age, has bidirectional relationships with systemic conditions such as <b>diabetes, kidney disease, and cardiovascular disease</b>.<sup>9-12</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor oral health, including periodontal disease, is linked with <b>increased risk of Alzheimer's disease</b> and other forms of dementia as well as <b>hospital-acquired pneumonia</b>.<sup>13</sup></li> <li>Older adults with fewer than 20 teeth are more likely to experience <b>greater overall disability and cognitive decline</b>.<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>

## Importance of Teeth



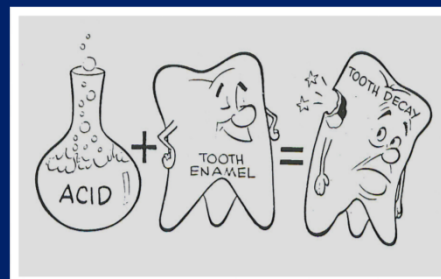
- Chewing
- Talking
- Appearance

“ You are not healthy without good oral health.”

Former Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop  
Second National Consortium Advance Program 2, 1993

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## What is Tooth Decay?



The **bacteria** in the **plaque** feed on the sugars from the food you eat, making acid. The acid destroys the tooth's enamel, and after repeated attacks create a hole, or "**cavity**".

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## Can Seniors Get Tooth Decay?

**Yes, especially prone to gum line or root decay.**

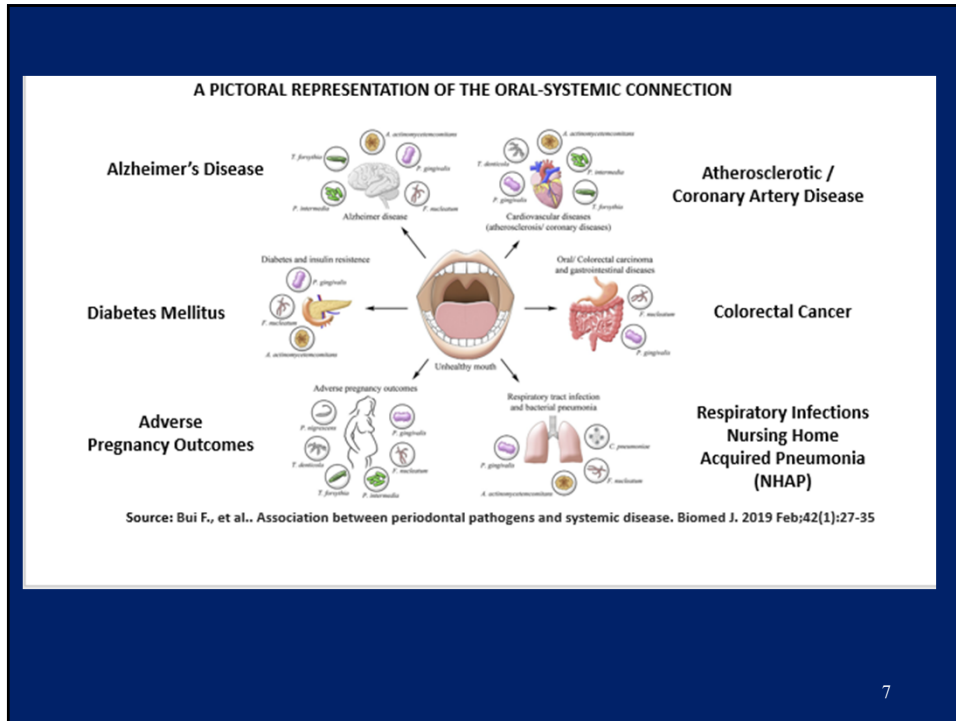
- **Dry mouth caused by a decrease in saliva due to certain diseases, medications, chemotherapy or natural aging.**
- **Inability to properly clean teeth due to physical limitations (arthritis, stroke, etc).**
- **Increased sugar consumption (hard candy, soda pop, sweetened drinks) to relieve dry mouth.**



## Importance of Oral Health Care

- **Oral and systemic health and disease are closely interconnected**
- **Oral infections make other disease processes worse**
- **Systemic disease very often has oral signs occurring early in the disease process which is very helpful in diagnosis (ex: Covid-19)**

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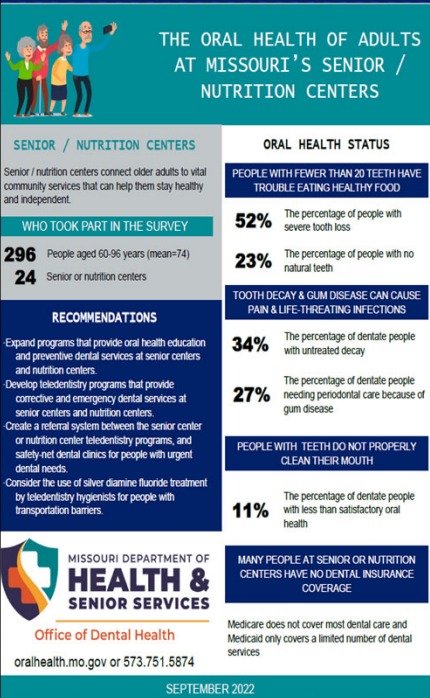
## Oral Health of Americans Over 65

- **Nearly 1 in 5 of adults aged 65 or older have lost all of their teeth. Complete tooth loss is twice as prevalent among adults aged 75 and older (26%) compared with adults aged 65-74 (13%).**
- **Gum disease severity increases with age.**
- **In adults who are 65 or older, the rate of gum disease rises to 70.1 percent.**
- **Most of the 8000 deaths from the 30,000 mouth/throat cancers diagnosed each year are found in the elderly.**

Source: [https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/adult-oral-health/adult\\_older.htm#:~:text=Tooth%20loss,.65%2D74%20\(13%25\).](https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/adult-oral-health/adult_older.htm#:~:text=Tooth%20loss,.65%2D74%20(13%25).)

<https://www.totalfamilydentalgroup.com/blog/articles/prevalence-of-gum-disease-in-us/#:~:text=The%20CDC's%20analysis%20showed%20that,of%2056.4%20and%2038.4%2C%20respectively.>

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**THE ORAL HEALTH OF ADULTS AT MISSOURI'S SENIOR / NUTRITION CENTERS**

**SENIOR / NUTRITION CENTERS**  
Senior / nutrition centers connect older adults to vital community services that can help them stay healthy and independent.

**WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY**  
**296** People aged 60-96 years (mean=74)  
**24** Senior or nutrition centers

**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
Expand programs that provide oral health education and preventive dental services at senior centers and nutrition centers.  
Develop teledentistry programs that provide corrective and emergency dental services at senior centers and nutrition centers.  
Create a referral system between the senior center or nutrition center teledentistry programs, and safety-net dental clinics for people with urgent dental needs.  
Consider the use of silver diamine fluoride treatment by teledentistry hygienists for people with transportation barriers.

**MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES**  
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oralhealth.mo.gov or 573.751.5874

SEPTEMBER 2022  
DATA SOURCE: MISSOURI ORAL HEALTH SURVEY OF VULNERABLE ADULTS, 2022

**Congregate Meal Site Participants (296)**

- **23% of Missourians have no natural teeth and 52% have experienced severe tooth loss (fewer than 20 teeth remaining).**
- **34% have untreated decay.**
- **27% need periodontal care due to gum disease.**
- **11% of Missourians at congregate meal sites have less than satisfactory oral care.**



**Missouri Basic Screening Survey (BSS) Of Older Adults 2022**

**THE ORAL HEALTH OF ADULTS LIVING IN MISSOURI'S SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES**

**SKILLED NURSING FACILITY**  
A facility where nursing care or related services are provided to residents of the facility

**WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY**  
**253** Residents aged 60-100 years (mean=76)  
**22** Skilled nursing facilities

**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
Expand programs that provide oral health education and preventive dental services at skilled nursing facilities.  
Develop programs that provide corrective and emergency dental services at skilled nursing facilities.  
Provide enhanced training to nursing facility staff about the importance of daily oral hygiene services including observation of possible future dental problems.  
Create a referral system between the skilled nursing facilities and safety-net dental clinics for people with urgent dental needs.  
Consider the use of silver diamine fluoride treatment by supervised teledentistry hygienists.

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SEPTEMBER 2022  
DATA SOURCE: MISSOURI ORAL HEALTH SURVEY OF VULNERABLE ADULTS, 2022

**Oral Health of Missourians Living in Skilled Nursing Facilities (253 residents in 24 facilities)**

- **38% of Missourians have no natural teeth and 73% have experienced severe tooth loss (fewer than 20 teeth remaining).**
- **40% have untreated decay.**
- **28% need periodontal care due to gum disease.**
- **49% of Missourians in skilled nursing facilities have less than satisfactory oral care.**

Source: Missouri Oral Health Survey of Vulnerable Adults, 2022

## **Recommendations from this BSS Survey**

- **Expand programs that provide oral health education and preventive dental services.**
- **Develop teledentistry programs.**
- **Create referral system.**
- **Use of Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) and temporary fillings.**



## **Barriers to Good Oral Health for Some Seniors**

- **Cannot care for themselves.**
- **Refuse care/will not open their mouths.**
- **Do not see the need for dental care or visits.**
- **May need extensive care due to long-term neglect.**
- **Lack money and insurance.**
- **Cannot find providers.**
- **Need transportation.**



## Master Plan on Aging

- On January 19, 2023, Governor Parson signed Executive Order 23-01 to establish a Master Plan on Aging to help reduce age and disability discrimination, eliminate barriers to safe and healthy aging, and help Missourians age with dignity. This Executive Order created an advisory council and tasked DHSS with the development of a plan by Dec. 31, 2025.
- A Master Plan on Aging is a cross-sector, state-led strategic resource that can help us transform the infrastructure and coordination of services for our rapidly aging population. The plan will build bridges across government agencies, facilitate collaboration with diverse stakeholders, promote equity, raise awareness among policymakers and the public, establish statewide priorities, and incorporate an aging and disability lens across state priorities beyond traditional health care and community.
- In addition to the advisory council, subcommittees will be formed to focus on core areas related to healthy aging. **ODH will be serving on the Whole-person Health Subcommittee for the Master Plan on Aging. Contact Mindy Ulstad 573-526-8534 or [Mindy.Ulstad@health.mo.gov](mailto:Mindy.Ulstad@health.mo.gov)**

## How You Can Help Improve Senior Oral Health

- Educate yourself on oral health issues.
- Ask seniors if they are getting routine dental care, even if they have dentures.
- Identify when and where to refer to a dental professional for emergency or routine care.
- Monitor oral health needs of patients who need assistance.
- Look for signs of tooth pain, swelling or trouble chewing.
- Invite a dental health professional to speak to your group about oral health for seniors.
- Apply Fluoride Varnish to keep teeth strong and resistant to decay.





## Check Oral Hygiene

- **Determine if your resident needs help with oral hygiene.**
- **Recommend that he/she:**
  - **Brushes at least twice daily (after breakfast and before bed) with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.**
  - **Uses a special desensitizing toothpaste if the teeth are sensitive.**
  - **Uses toothbrushing aids like an electric toothbrush, handgrips, floss holders or interdental brushes if the patient has difficulty using his/her hands.**
  - **Flosses daily.**
  - **Cleans and soaks dentures and partials daily.**
- **Ask if the patient receives routine dental check-ups.**

Source: [http://jada.ada.org/cgi/content/full/137/suppl\\_2/21S](http://jada.ada.org/cgi/content/full/137/suppl_2/21S)

[http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/igec/e\\_learning/dentistry/photos/sec01page03a.jpg](http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/igec/e_learning/dentistry/photos/sec01page03a.jpg) photo retrieved 8/30/6, used with permission

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## Proper Brushing



Courtesy of UMKC School of Dentistry Photography Department and the Division of Dental Hygiene

- **Tilt the brush at a 45 degree angle against the gumline.**
- **Brush only 2-3 teeth at a time, gently brush the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of all your teeth.**
- **Use short back-and-forth or circular strokes.**

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## Toothbrushing Handgrips Are Useful for Those Needing Help Brushing



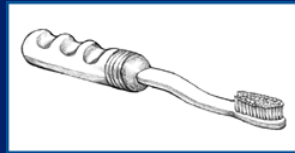
velcro



rubberband



tennis ball



bicycle grip

Source: <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/HealthInformation/DiseasesAndConditions/DevelopmentalDisabilitiesAndOralHealth/DentalCareEveryDay.htm> graphics retrieved 8/7/06

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## Proper Flossing



Use about 18" of floss leaving an inch or two of working room.



Be sure to go below the gumline, but avoid snapping the floss on the gums.



Gently follow the curves of your teeth, sliding the floss up and down the tooth surface a few times.

Courtesy of UMKC School of Dentistry  
Photography Department and the  
Division of Dental Hygiene

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## Oral Health Products

- **Soft toothbrush**
  - Electric brushes
- **Dental floss**
  - Floss holders
- **Interdental brushes**
- **Bridge threaders**
- **Tongue cleaners**
- **Fluoride toothpaste**
- **Mouthrinses (non-alcohol)**
  - Bad breath
- **Sugarless gum (xylitol)**



<http://www.ndc.com.sg/ForPatientsNVisitors/PatientEducation/YourGumsPeriodis.htm>;

photo of interdental brush retrieved 7/31/06; used with permission of National Dental Center, Singapore

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## Check for Mouth Sores

- **Infections**
- **Gum boils**
- **Redness**
- **Lesions or tumors**
- **Fungus**
  - **Corners of mouth**
  - **Inside mouth**



<http://dentistry.umkc.edu/practition/assets/OralLesions.pdf>

[www.medicine.uiowa.edu/igec/e\\_learning/dentistry/section02/page12](http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/igec/e_learning/dentistry/section02/page12) retrieved 10/20/06; used with permission

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## Look for Gum / Tooth Abscess

- **Localized swelling, may or may not have fever or pain.**
- **Risk for severe facial or systemic infection can be deadly.**
- **Do NOT try to drain or “pop” the abscess.**



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dental\\_abscess](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dental_abscess)

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## Dental Care

- **Must be a priority**
- **Add an oral exam to intake check list**
- **Must be part of daily care for the residents**
- **Teach care takers on adaptive strategies to help to improve oral health**

**Thank you for your attention  
today!**

**Do you have any questions?**

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