

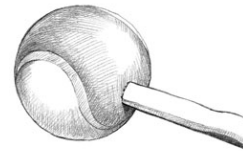


## FIVE ORAL CARE TIPS FOR SENIORS<sup>1</sup>

Maintaining a healthy mouth in a few easy steps:

### 1. Brush and Floss Daily

- The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends brushing your teeth using a fluoride toothpaste for 2 minutes 2 times a day. Use a toothbrush with soft bristles and a small head to get to hard to reach areas. Remember brushing doesn't clean between your teeth so don't forget to floss daily.
- If you have difficulty holding the toothbrush due to arthritis or other conditions that limit movements, try to adapt the toothbrush with Velcro, rubber bands or even a tennis ball to make it easier to hold. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NICDR) offers great suggestions. Illustrations from its [website which are shown](#) below:



### 2. Clean Dentures Every Day

- Bacteria can stick to your teeth but also to your full or partial dentures. If you wear dentures remember to clean them on a daily basis with cleaners made specifically for dentures. Do not use tooth pastes for natural teeth or household cleaners as they are too abrasive and can damage dentures that can be expensive and difficult to replace. Your dentist will recommend to take your dentures out of your mouth for at least 4 hours every 24 hours to keep the tissue inside your mouth healthy. Your dentist can instruct you on how long dentures should be worn each day.

### 3. Drink Water with Fluoride and Use Over-the-Counter Oral Rinses/Moisturizers

- No matter what age you are, drinking water with fluoride helps prevent tooth decay. This is particularly important for seniors as they are more prone to root decay and often suffer dry mouth due to the many medications they must take. Many community water systems already contain fluoride, but if drinking bottled water, check the label, because some do not. In any case, water consumption can help a person and specially a senior stay hydrated and deal with dry mouth, as dry mouth is also a common cause of cavities. Over-the-counter oral rinses/moisturizers like a mouthwash can help. Your dentist will recommend what specific rinse is appropriate for a senior patient based on their specific dental conditions.

### 4. Eat a healthy and balanced diet

What you eat impacts not only your general health but also that of your teeth and gums, Individual nutritional and calorie needs depend on a person's age, gender, level of physical activity and other health factors but according to the U.S Department of Agriculture a balanced and healthy diet should include: fruits and vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein.

## 5. Visit your Dentist on a Regular Basis

- Regular visits are an important part of staying healthy. During your dental visit, your dentist will look for early signs of tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer.
- If you wear dentures, you should get a dental check-up at least once a year and not wait until they experience pain or have dental problems. When visiting your dentist is important to bring a list of all the medical conditions and the medications you are currently taking. It is also important to bring contact information for your healthcare provider and a list of any questions you may have in advance so you can be sure to leave the dental office with all concerns addressed.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/adults-over-60/healthy-habits>