DELTA DENTAL®

Always Make Time for Senior Oral Health Care

When an older adult enters a long-term care facility, family members and caregivers need to make sure oral hygiene remains a priority.

Good oral health is essential to overall health.

- Maintaining a healthy mouth helps seniors eat properly and sleep well.
- Removing plaque from teeth before it can enter the bloodstream lowers the risk of blood clots, hardening of the arteries and blood sugar problems.
- Improving oral hygiene reduces the chances of getting pneumonia or dying from it.[1]

Tips for caregivers:

- Always wash hands thoroughly.
- 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 reduce the flow of saliva, increasing the risk of tooth decay.
- Check the patient's mouth for any broken teeth or sores, blisters or lumps.

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

Did you know?

Ten percent of Americans over age 85 live in long-term care facilities.[2]

Quick bites

Caregivers should compile oral health histories on the older adults they assist. 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 the 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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Visit us online for more information on oral and overall health!

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.

Healthy Smile, Happy Life

Delta Dental of Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee

RC-6282 v1 PA 8/16