

BUZZ, BODY & BITES

A newsletter for actively aging adults

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Family & Consumer Sciences

October 2022 Newsletter

Buzz

COMMON CAUSES OF ORAL HEALTH ISSUES IN ADULTS

- **Difficulty brushing and flossing teeth:** Physical disabilities, like arthritis, can make brushing and flossing teeth difficult. Use an electric toothbrush or buy a toothbrush with a wide handle or a universal weighted handle attachment, and use a dental floss holder to help with this.
- **Lack of dental insurance** — Many adults lose their dental insurance when they retire. Your local Area Agency on Aging and United Way Chapter can help you find reduced cost dental services. Dental schools often have clinics that provide services at a reduced cost, as do community health clinics. Reach out to your county health department to locate reduced cost dental clinics.
- **Dry mouth** — Dry mouth increases risk for tooth decay and oral fungal infections. It can occur as a result of medications used to control high blood pressure, depression, and bladder control. Sipping water regularly, using artificial saliva, and sucking on tart, sugarless hard candy can help.
- **Lack of transportation for dental care** — Some health insurers, including Medicaid, cover medical transportation costs. Medicare does not. Public transportation is an option if available, and many offer Senior discounts. Reach out to your local Area Agency on Aging to see what transportation options exist for older adults in your community.
- **Tobacco use** — Tobacco use is a risk factor for oral cancer and should be avoided. If you use tobacco, ask your doctor about your options to help quit.



Dental Hygiene for a Lifetime of Eating Pleasure and Health

Dental hygiene is vital for older adults. According to the CDC, 1 out of 5 adults aged 65 and older have no remaining teeth! This fact may not be unexpected as nearly 1 in 3 older adults have tooth decay that has gone untreated, and 2 out of 3 have gum disease. Good dental hygiene throughout life is key to keeping a healthy set of teeth.

So, why is dental hygiene important? Oral health is often a precursor to other health issues such as heart or lung disease and strokes. Older adults also typically suffer from dry mouth and sensitive teeth. A dry mouth can be a result of medications or other health concerns and cause cavities, while sensitive teeth can be the result of shrinking gums or grinding one's teeth. Missing teeth can lead to inadequate nutrition resulting from dietary changes to accommodate teeth issues, such as only eating soft foods.

Prevention is key for oral health. Experts recommend visiting your dentist every six months for cleanings, checkups, or x-rays (as needed). It's important to follow the three basic steps of dental hygiene on a daily basis: rinsing, brushing, and flossing:

Rinsing

Rinse your mouth prior to brushing to loosen any food particles; then rinse again after brushing using an alcohol-free mouthwash that contains fluoride.

Brushing

When it comes to brushing, invest in a good toothbrush with soft or extra-soft bristles and replace them every 3-4 months or as the bristles begin to get damaged. It is recommended to brush at least twice a day for two minutes at a time and to use toothpaste with the American Dental Association (ADA) Seal of Acceptance. Invest in assistive tools or electric toothbrushes if medical conditions, such as arthritis, make it difficult to brush your teeth.

Flossing

Flossing is essential to loosen food particles between teeth, remove bacteria, and prevent gum disease and cavities. If regular floss is too painful, ask your dentist or pharmacist for other suggestions such as floss picks.

If access to a dentist is a concern, reach out to your local Area Agency on Aging who may know of affordable resources in your region.

Contributed by Aisha Salazaar, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent, Arlington, VA

Bites

Berry Yogurt Popsicles



Mashed red cherries, blackberries, and Greek yogurt make for a healthy, low-sugar treat. Berries are rich in phytochemicals like anthocyanins and ellagic acid, that are antioxidants and reduce inflammation.

Source: aicr.org/cancer-prevention/recipe

Ingredients (Makes 12 servings):

- 1 1/2 cups pitted fresh or frozen cherries
- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen blackberries
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 24 oz. vanilla Greek yogurt
- 12 (3 oz.) paper cups and 12 popsicle sticks

Instructions:

1. In a small mixing bowl mash cherries and blackberries.
2. Drizzle honey over the fruit and mix together.
3. In paper cups, layer alternating spoonfuls of yogurt and fruit until full. Place popsicle stick or plastic spoon in each cup and freeze.
4. When ready to serve, tear paper cup off popsicle and enjoy.

Mind Games

Trick or Treat Word Find

F K N O E R O E U L S J T D Y
L R C E D U T S I T N E D K Z
O M N I E T N N Y Y E U O L I
S X O H R W C I K T X O M F M
S E E N V T O R H S P K Y E V
Y N J C M U F L C S W D M P Z
S E S T A E R T L J N E V Z F
O I A X X Y E I M A S P E B H
F G F V B D U K C Z H Z R T P
A Y Y P M H R A Q X R E U H V
C H G F I A H N S H Q R W T B
K P H K Y L J O I O Z I L C H
S K J K I H Z I C I C L Q J W
T O O T H B R U S H L M H F G
G R L E C W G W X J M B K G B

Find the following words in the puzzle:

Candy
Halloween
Spooky
Toothbrush
Dentist
Hygiene
Sweet
Treats
Floss
Rinse
Teeth
Trick

Body

Flexibility Exercises Chair Rotation Stretch



1. Sit up straight in a chair with feet planted on the ground.
2. Roll shoulders back to sit up straight and slowly twist to one side.
3. Look with your head in the direction you're turning.
4. You can use your arms to grab the seat and twist a little deeper if you'd like.
5. Slowly return to facing forward.
6. Repeat on the other side and as many times as you desire.

RESOURCES

Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging:
Find Your AAA — vaaaa.org/25-area-agencies-on-aging

Senior Living - seniorliving.org

National Institute on Aging: Taking Care of Your Teeth and Mouth - www.nia.nih.gov/health/taking-care-your-teeth-and-mouth#dry-mouth

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