



Your mouth is talking. *Are you listening?*

A lot goes unsaid

when you've been together as long as we have. But it's time to chat. Whether all these teeth are yours or not, older adults face unique oral health concerns – from **arthritis** to **drug side effects**. Please keep up the daily hygiene, and open up to your dentist. **YOUR MOUTH**

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Oral Health for Older Adults

You and your mouth have known each other a long time, but there are a few things it may be trying to tell you. Older adults can face unique oral health challenges. With a few tips from the Missouri Dental Association (MDA), you can maintain healthy teeth and gums and prevent problems that can lead to more serious health conditions.

- **OSTEOPOROSIS** Some drugs used to treat osteoporosis contain bisphosphonates, which have been linked to a condition called osteonecrosis of the jaw (ONJ). This rare but serious disease can cause severe destruction of the jawbones. Dental procedures that affect the bone can further increase the risk of developing ONJ. Talk to your dentist if you take a drug that contains bisphosphonates. For a list, visit YourMouthIsTalking.org.

Simple tasks such as eating, swallowing and talking are difficult for a person with a toothache. What's more, a toothache could indicate a more serious problem. If you have a toothache, see your MDA dentist.
- **DRY MOUTH** Older adults may experience dry mouth, which can be due to a medical condition or medication. Dry mouth can lead to tooth decay, bad breath and other oral health problems. If you have dry mouth, take extra care to brush and floss at least twice a day and see your dentist, who can determine if your dry mouth is due to medication or is a symptom of a more serious problem.
- **ARTHRITIS** There are many dental products available to help people with hand pain, such as pre-threaded flossers, flexible plastic picks with bristles and power toothbrushes. These toothbrushes are easy to operate and, if you have arthritis, they can help you clean teeth more effectively than a manual toothbrush.
- **ORAL FUNGUS** Older adults have an increased risk of developing oral fungus. Denture wearers may develop an inflammation of the tissue underlying a denture. This is usually caused by ill-fitting dentures, poor dental hygiene or the buildup of fungus. For some, small, red sores develop on the roof of the mouth making it difficult to talk or eat. Infection can be treated with antifungal medication and prevented with good oral hygiene.

SOURCES

National Center for Health and Statistics, The Alliance for Aging Research, Mayo Clinic

Brush, floss and visit your MDA dentist.

For more on what your mouth is trying to tell you, visit YourMouthIsTalking.org.