

Why are older adults at risk?

-Limited Finances and Transportation; The senior population experiences limited mobility and may have difficulties in securing transportation to a regular dental appointment. Restricted finances are also a concern, as dental procedures can be expensive. Without dental insurance, many seniors find that doing without care is their only option.

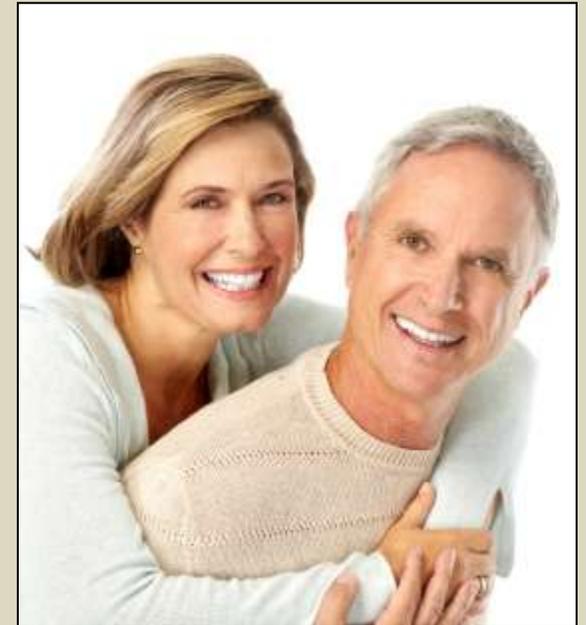
-Medications and Nutrition Concerns; Saliva naturally promotes a healthy oral environment, and medications that cause dry mouth can promote cavities. Diet restrictions and difficulty eating can promote an acidic oral environment that causes decay and tissue loss within the mouth.

-Reduced Dexterity and Cleaning Abilities; Seniors with limited dexterity or arthritis can have trouble maintaining brushing and flossing habits, contributing to oral health problems.

-More Elderly with Natural Teeth; Endentulism (the lack of teeth) has decreased by nearly 20% over the last 20 years. With more seniors retaining their natural teeth, oral decay and oral pain can become debilitating.

-Unaware of the value of preventive oral health; For many seniors, dental care has been treatment oriented, and for individuals that do not seek oral health care until pain is present, it may be too late to save damaged tissues.

Dental Care for Michigan Seniors



A Look at Common Oral Diseases, Risk Factors, and Care Options for Michigan Seniors

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In partnership with the GVSU Frederick Meijer Honors College, Coalition for Oral Health for the Aging, and The Advocates for Senior Issues.

Common Oral Diseases

<p>Dental Caries (Tooth Decay): The destruction of the hard dental tissues of the teeth. Caused by the acid byproducts of microbes that exist within the mouth. Poor oral health habits, reduced salivary flow, and a poor diet can promote an environment ideal for microbes.</p>	<p>Preventive Care: Fluoride therapy, removal of plaque/biofilm, dietary counseling, saliva stimulation, mouthwashes.</p>
<p>Periodontal Disease: Inflammation and destruction of the tissues supporting the teeth. Caused by poor oral health habits that lead to the buildup of dental plaque.</p>	<p>Preventive Care: Brushing, flossing, regular dental cleanings.</p>
<p>Oral Cancer: Cancer of the oral tissues most commonly involving the lips and tongue. Smoking and tobacco use are associated with 70-80% of oral cancer cases, as the smoke and heat irritates the tissues. Alcohol and chewing tobacco are also strong risk factors.</p>	<p>Treatment: Available only once diagnosed. A standard oral exam can effectively screen for oral cancer.</p>

Poor Oral Health and Overall Health

Systemic Conditions; The invasion of microbes and the inflammation caused by poor oral health affects other systemic conditions. A dental exam can screen for over 120 medical conditions. Currently, associations between poor oral health and heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia infections, and dementia have been established. Researchers are currently uncovering the mechanisms behind these connections.

Finding care in Michigan...

Unfortunately the basic Medicare (65 yrs +) program does not provide for preventive or routine dental care, and in many cases will only provide for emergency care.

Medicaid News:

As of October 1, 2010 The Public Act 187 of 2010 has reinstated adult dental benefits for those within the Medicaid (not Medicare) program. Benefits include routine examinations, prophylaxis, restorations, and dentures. Benefits were cut in 2009 due to budget cuts.

Low Cost Care:

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH): www.michigan.gov/oralhealth

A great resource for locating dental professionals and community clinics that are in position to help statewide. Located on the MDCH website are two resources to find care:

- **Vulnerable Elderly Directory:** Compiled by the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Coalition for Oral Health for the Aging. The directory lists dentists and hygienists that agreed to be listed for contact.

www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/7-10_Vulnerable_Elderly_Directory_7-10_329883_7.pdf

- **Oral Health Directory:** The directory lists all dental agencies that may provide reduced cost care for disadvantaged patients.

www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/oral_health_directory_2009_332570_7.pdf

MDCH Phone: (517)373-3740



Advocating for Senior Care...

1. Establish the Cost Effectiveness of Providing Preventive Dental Care

Minor dental disease may develop into serious conditions, requiring expensive care...

- The cost of hospitalization/emergency dental care is ten times that of office dental treatment.
- It is estimated that \$10 billion dollars are saved in treatment costs per year by fluoridation and tooth decay prevention within the United States.

2. Increase Medicaid Reimbursement Rates

Often times reimbursement rates are low in comparison to private insurances. Competitive reimbursements will expand the network of dentists willing to provide care.

*A full report from the MDA, "A United Voice for Oral Health Care" is available online at...

www.smilemichigan.com/Portals/1/PDFs/Latest%20News/united_voice_for_oral_health.pdf

Groups Publicizing the Issue:

-**ASTDD: Association of State & Territorial Dental Directors** (www.astdd.org)
The ASTDD may be the best resource for future community health surveys. The organization is publishing Basic Screening Survey Tools that have been implemented in other states.

-**COHA: Coalition for Oral Health for the Aging** (www.micoha.org)
The group aims to improve dental care for Michigan seniors through advocacy, research, public education.

-**ADA: American Dental Association** (www.ada.org)
In 2007, the ADA published results from the "Oral Health Care of Vulnerable Elderly Patients Survey".
http://www.ada.org/sections/publicResources/pdfs/oral_elderly_survey.pdf