

# Oral Health is Whole Health

## What is Oral Health?

*Oral health is essential to general health and well-being. It affects our ability to eat, speak, smile, and show emotions. Oral health also affects a person's self-esteem, school performance, and attendance at work or school.*

### Adult Oral Health

The benefits of fluoride in water and toothpaste have helped the baby-boomer generation to be the first majority of people that will keep their natural teeth over their entire lifetime. However, threats to oral health, including tooth loss, continue throughout life.

### Keeping Teeth and Gums Healthy

Practice good oral hygiene by brushing your teeth thoroughly 2x a day and flossing daily between the teeth to remove plaque. Visit your dentist at least 1x a year, even if you have no natural teeth or have dentures. Dentists will screen for oral & neck cancers that a doctor may not screen for.

### Life Impact

Oral disease can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, and learning. It can also affect social interaction and employment potential.

### Risk for Disease

Tobacco use and diabetes are two risk factors for gum disease. Integration between oral health and chronic disease prevention benefits patients and saves money. Seeing your doctor and dentist for regular checkups is vital for monitoring your risk for disease.

### Talk to Your Doctor or Dentist

Share any discomfort you are having with your doctor/dentist & talk about what can be done. For example, if your meds make your mouth dry, they can help you find a solution or suggest strategies for finding comfort. See your doctor/dentist if you have sudden changes in taste and smell.

# Oral Health Conditions and their Impact on Whole Health

## Types of Oral Conditions and Disease

Tooth decay, cracked or broken teeth, sensitive teeth, gum disease, oral cancers are all examples of oral health conditions or disease. If you have diabetes, work to maintain control of the disease. This will decrease risk for other complications, including gum disease. Treating gum disease may help lower your blood sugar level.

## What might lead to Oral Health Problems?

Smoking, poor brushing habits, diabetes, family history, acid reflux or heartburn, hormonal changes, medication, HIV AIDS, eating or drinking sugary food/drinks can all contribute to oral health problems.

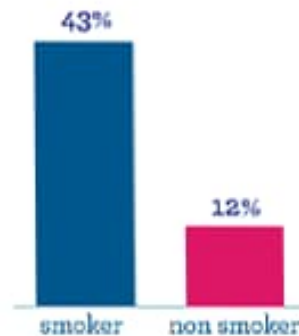
People who smoke are 3 times more likely to lose all of their teeth



**4 in 10** older adults who currently smoke cigarettes **lost all of their teeth.**

<http://bit.ly/OralHealthReport>

Percentage of adults aged 65 or older who lost all of their teeth, 2011-2016



## Signs you Need to See a Dentist

Poor brushing habits, eating and drinking sugary food/drink, diabetes, taking medications (including psychiatric medication), family history/genetics, HIV & AIDS, hormonal changes, acid reflux or heartburn. If you are managing any of these, you should be seeing a dentist.

## Oral Health and SMI

Medications, dental phobia, costs and limited access to care have all been shown to contribute to oral health problems. Those who experience serious mental illness tend to have more oral health issues or complications than the general population.