

Older Adults

- › Good oral health is important for good general health.
- › Preventing tooth decay and gum disease starts at home.
- › Untreated gum disease may be a risk factor for heart and lung disease, stroke, and diabetes.
- › Teeth with exposed roots get decay easily.
- › Dry mouth can be caused by medications or health conditions. It may lead to dental decay and difficulty in eating.
- › To relieve dry mouth, use frequent sips of fluoridated water, a saliva substitute product, or sugar-free lozenges. Let your dental provider, physician, or pharmacist know if you have dry mouth.
- › Brush teeth and gums twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, after breakfast and before bed with a soft toothbrush. Floss every night.
- › Clean teeth, dentures, crowns, and bridgework daily with



floss, toothpicks, or inter-dental brushes. Brush dentures/partial after each meal and soak overnight in water.

- ▶ Drink tap water that is optimally fluoridated. Fluoride is safe, effective, and keeps teeth strong.
- ▶ Caregivers need to reinforce the daily oral hygiene of older adults who are unable to do it by themselves.
- ▶ Sweet and starchy foods may cause tooth decay. Eat these foods at meal time. In between meals, snack on fresh fruits, vegetables, cheese, or nuts.
- ▶ Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs. Smokers have more gum disease and oral cancer than non-smokers. Alcohol with smoking increases the risk for oral cancer.
- ▶ Visit a dental provider for dental exams and oral cancer screening even if you have no teeth and wear dentures. Dental providers are available in private dental offices, community health clinics, senior centers, and mobile vans.

To reprint cards visit:

www.doh.wa.gov/OralHealthPromotionCards

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY 711).



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