



# Senior Care

LIBERTY cares about more than just teeth!

Keeping Your Teeth  
Healthy in Your  
Golden Years

## Your dental health becomes more important as you grow older.

As you age, your body does not fight illnesses as well as it did when you were younger. The risk of dental problems rises and becomes harder to treat.

## Good Dental Health is Part of Good Overall Health

Your mouth is connected to your body. There is a link between the health of our mouth and the health of our body. If you have an illness such as diabetes or heart disease, poor oral health can have a negative effect on these illnesses. Lung diseases can also be a risk with poor oral hygiene.

**Gum Disease** Gum disease is a common problem. Gum disease is caused by the germs in plaque and tartar on your teeth. Smoking can also play a big role. Since it is harder to fight infections as we age, symptoms can progress faster to the later stages of gum disease. Late stage gum disease includes irritated, red, and bleeding gums, bad breath, and loose teeth. Many people believe that it is common to lose your teeth as you age. This is not true. If cared for correctly, your teeth can last a lifetime.



**Dry Mouth** The amount of saliva that is produced as you age naturally becomes slower. Medication and certain diseases can also cause dry mouth. This condition can lead to other oral problems. These problems can include cavities, sores, and mouth infections. Visiting your dentist for regular checkups can help to recognize dry mouth and to prevent the problems it can cause.

**Tooth Decay** A result of receding gums and dry mouth can be tooth decay. It is important to keep the area where the tooth and the gum meet each other clean. Try to use fluoride toothpaste and no-alcohol fluoride rinse. Having a diet that reduces

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sugar and acidic food is helpful. Visiting the dentist for regular checkups, cleanings and fluoride treatments are important to help prevent cavities as you age.

**Oral Cancer** The risk of oral cancer goes up as we age. More than half of oral cancer patients are over the age of 65. Age, smoking, tobacco use and frequent alcohol raise the risk. Watch for any odd lumps, rough spots or sores that do not heal.

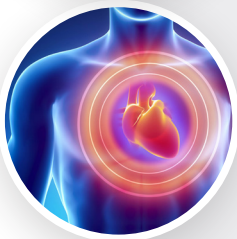
Even if you wear dentures you should visit your dentist at least twice a year for an oral cancer screening.



## Good Dental Health protects against:



- **Diabetes** - You are more likely to get problems in your mouth if your diabetes is not under control. One effect of having gum disease may be trouble controlling your blood sugar.



- **Heart Disease** - When your gums are not healthy, germs in your mouth from gum disease can make your risk of heart disease and stroke higher. Germs from gum disease have been shown to enter your bloodstream. The redness and bleeding from gum disease can add to the inflammation throughout your body. This includes your blood vessels.



- **Lung Disease** - Germs or pieces of food left in your mouth can travel into the lungs. When this happens, a lung infection can follow. Lung diseases such as pneumonia and bronchitis have also been linked to gum disease.