



Dementia and Oral Health

A study from the National Institute on Aging found an association with oral health and dementia, as an analysis revealed older adults with signs of periodontal (gum) disease and mouth infections were more likely to develop Alzheimer's.¹ While the association between oral health and dementia continues to be researched, we know that gum disease is linked to many systemic diseases, including diabetes and heart disease.

Having a condition, such as dementia, can also make it more difficult to practice good daily oral hygiene, increasing the risk for gum disease and tooth decay.

To reduce gum disease and tooth decay, here are tips for caregivers helping assist individuals with dementia:



If the individual has dexterity issues, consider an electric toothbrush to make it easier for them to keep their teeth and gums clean. Some companies now manufacture toothbrushes with extra-large handles for better grip as well.



To help an individual who has memory issues, write short, step-by-step instructions for brushing and flossing and post them near the sink for easy reference. The American Dental Association recommends brushing twice daily for two minutes each time for optimal oral health. It is crucial that health aids, nurses or family members assisting those with memory loss understand the importance of maintaining excellent daily oral hygiene so they can reinforce this daily and provide extra support.



Prioritize regular dental checkups and let the dentist know of any oral health issues, such as dry mouth or pain. If the individual is missing teeth, discuss options with their dentist to help retain as much normal function as possible. Dentists may also recommend higher concentration prescription fluoride toothpaste or mouth rinse to use at home to help combat the effects of dry mouth and tooth decay.



It's possible to have gum disease and tooth decay without any warning signs. That's why regular dental checkups and periodontal exams are crucial. The dentist can evaluate risk factors and help reduce risks for other health conditions by working with their caregiver to determine proper treatment.

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