



PREVENTING TOOTH LOSS

of tooth decay. This is why it is important for you to keep your dentist up-to-date on any medications or supplements you may be taking.

CONCLUSION

The risk of experiencing tooth loss may increase as you age. Good oral hygiene at home and regular visits to your dentist may help reduce this risk. These measures will allow you to enjoy your teeth throughout your life. They will give you more than just a good-looking smile.

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TAKING CARE OF YOUR TEETH

The best ways to help control tooth decay and gum disease—two major causes of tooth loss—are good oral hygiene and regular visits to your dentist. Good oral hygiene involves the following:

- **Brushing your teeth with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day for two minutes each time (you can use a manual or powered toothbrush, whichever is easier to handle)**
- **Cleaning between your teeth with a product designed for that purpose—special picks, brushes, dental floss, or a water flosser**

Your dentist also may suggest a mouth rinse to provide extra help in preventing tooth decay. Be sure to see your dentist regularly, and at every visit be sure to tell them about your overall health and any medicines or supplements you are taking.

Your teeth are more than just part of a beautiful smile. Healthy teeth help you speak clearly and allow you to eat a variety of foods, thereby helping you maintain a healthy diet. A large national study found that people older than 65 years who had good dental health tended to be healthier overall.¹ So, it is important to take care of your teeth.

TOOTH LOSS

Research shows that more than one in three adults aged 65 years or older have lost six or more teeth. And about one in 10 in this age group have lost all their teeth. Leading up to the age of 65 years, however, adults seem to fare much better, with nearly 68% keeping all their teeth.² This suggests that after the age of 65, there are some thing or things that are different about oral health, the care given to teeth and gums, or both.

HOW TO PREVENT TOOTH LOSS

The most common reasons for tooth loss may be controlled with good oral hygiene and regular visits to the dentist (see “Taking Care of Your Teeth,” at right). Often, older adults lose teeth to tooth decay and gum disease.³ Although just about everyone has had tooth decay by the age of 65, nearly one-half of the adults in this age bracket have untreated tooth decay or gum disease serious enough to cause tooth loss.^{4,5}

Sometimes tooth loss is not easily controlled. Some people with certain chronic diseases—such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes—seem to lose more teeth as they age than people who do not have those diseases.¹ Although it is not clear whether one causes the other, you should let your dentist know if you have any chronic disease.

Certain medications, taken regularly, can cause chronic dry mouth. Without enough saliva to wash food particles out of your mouth when chewing and to bathe your teeth in fluoride, which strengthens your teeth, you are at greater risk