



6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2360, West Allis, WI 53214

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 7, 2019

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:
Davis Renzelmann
414-755-4110 or drenzelmann@wda.org

CONNECT, CREATE AND CONTRIBUTE TO OLDER AMERICANS MONTH WITH THESE TOOTH TIPS

May is Older Americans Month and is focused on promoting healthy lifestyles in older adults, as well as raising awareness about the important issues they face.

"Older adults need greater attention to their teeth," said Dr. Charles Hajinian, a general dentist in Milwaukee and member of the Wisconsin Dental Association. "Visiting the dentist two to three times each year would be advantageous, as most older adults have receded gums that expose the root surfaces to decay. When you add dry mouth and lots of aging dental work, this equals a need for constant monitoring. Dental care must be a lifelong pattern."

The WDA encourages the following practices for older adults to maintain healthy smiles:

- **Don't skip appointments.** Older adults should visit the dentist regularly. It is important to visit the dentist *before* experiencing discomfort as pain from a cavity could mean it is already too late to salvage the tooth. This principle applies to more than just cavities, as other risks, such as oral cancer and gum disease, may not become apparent until the late stages of the disease. Early treatment of these conditions can save patients from problematic and costly treatments down the road.
- **Combat dry mouth.** Dry mouth affects many older Americans and is a common side-effect of prescription and over-the-counter medications. Reduced amounts of saliva can cause harmful results as it plays an essential role in maintaining a healthy mouth. Saliva keeps the mouth wet, helping to fight tooth-decaying bacteria and rebuild enamel. Dry mouth can be improved by drinking more water, chewing sugar-free gum and avoiding beverages such as coffee, alcohol and carbonated soft drinks. If symptoms are not reduced through these methods, talk to your dentist about oral moisturizers and saliva-producing prescriptions.
- **Increase fluoridation.** We hear a lot about the importance of fluoride for children, but ingesting appropriate amounts of fluoride helps prevent tooth decay at any age. Be sure to use toothpastes that contain fluoride and drink plenty of tap water. Bottled water is less likely to contain the optimal amount of fluoride that your body needs to fight cavities. Proper hydration not only aids your oral health, but can help reduce fatigue and lower heart rate as well.
- **Avoid tobacco.** It is never too late to quit using tobacco. In addition to the threat of multiple types of cancer, tobacco users are far more vulnerable to periodontal diseases. These conditions infect the structures around the teeth, damaging gums and can destroy the jawbone. Using tobacco also slows down the healing process after dental procedures and decreases the success rate of dental implants. Talk to your dentist about quitting and the various prescriptions and programs available to you.

more

The National Council of Senior Citizens and then-President John F. Kennedy first chose May as Older Americans Month in April 1963. This celebration was established to recognize the contributions made by older Americans of past and present, particularly those who defended our country. Led by the [Administration for Community Living](#) each year, the month is celebrated nationally through ceremonies, events, fairs and other activities.

This year's theme, "Connect, Create, Contribute," encourages older adults and their communities to: **connect** with friends, family and services that support participation, **create** by engaging in activities that promote learning, health, and personal enrichment and **contribute** time, talent, and life experience to benefit others.

For more information on healthy smiles at any age, please visit WDA.org.

About the Wisconsin Dental Association

The Wisconsin Dental Association, with 3,100 member dentists and a number of dental hygienists, is the leading voice for dentistry in Wisconsin. WDA members are committed to promoting professional excellence and quality oral health care. Established in 1870, the WDA is headquartered in West Allis and has a legislative office in Madison. The WDA is affiliated with the American Dental Association - the largest and oldest national dental association in the world. For more information, call 414-276-4520, visit WDA.org and find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).