Facts About Oral Health And Older Adults

- Two out of three Americans over 65 years of age have multiple chronic health conditions such as hypertension, arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia, and cancer.

- People with chronic disease may be at higher risk for periodontal (gum) disease.

- Older people have the highest rate of periodontal disease.

- The risk for root decay increases as people age.

- Sixty-four is the median age for diagnosing oral cancer.

- Very few people over 65 have insurance that covers dental care.

- Seniors often take multiple medications for chronic diseases which increases the likelihood of dry mouth.

- Dry mouth conditions increase the risk of oral disease.

Resources

- American Dental Association  
  www.ada.org

- American Diabetes Association  
  www.diabetes.org

- American Academy of Periodontology  
  www.perio.org

- Kansas Dental Association  
  www.kda.org

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
  www.cdc.gov

- National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
  www.chronicdisease.org

- Special Care Dentistry Association  
  http://scdonline.org

- Kansas Bureau of Oral Health  
  www.kdheks/ohi/

- Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved  
  www.kspca.org

- Oral Health Kansas  
  www.oralhealthkansas.org
How to Use This Guide

The Oral Health Guide can be used at any time during an appointment with a patient. Since an individual’s conditions can change over time, there is benefit to conducting the assessment at initial appointments and follow-up visits. If patients identify any of these concerns, encourage them to call for an appointment to see a dental professional.

Next Steps
If the patient needs help finding a dentist...
- www.ada.org/ada/findadentist/advancedsearch.aspx
- www.kdheks.gov/ohi/health_care_assist.html

Oral Health Questionnaire

1. Are you being treated for any dental condition?  □ Yes □ No
2. Do you have any pain in your mouth? □ Yes □ No
3. Do you have pain when chewing food? □ Yes □ No
4. Do you feel pain in your teeth when eating hot or cold foods? □ Yes □ No
5. Do your gums ever bleed? □ Yes □ No
6. Are your gums are tender, red or swollen? □ Yes □ No
7. Do you have any teeth that feel loose? □ Yes □ No
8. If you have dentures, do they feel loose? □ Yes □ No
9. Do you have any sores in your mouth that have been there for more than a month? □ Yes □ No
10. Are you concerned about persistent bad breath? □ Yes □ No
11. Do you have a difficult time brushing and flossing? □ Yes □ No
12. Does your mouth often feel dry? □ Yes □ No

Benefits to Using This Tool

- This guide was developed to assist medical, health and geriatric professionals to identify older adults who may be experiencing concerns about their oral conditions.
- On average seniors visit physicians more than five times a year, offering an opportunity for oral screenings.
- This guide can be used to gather information from patients about their concerns and improve communication about their oral health.
- Patients who identify a concern about their oral health will benefit from a suggestion to see a dental professional.
- Patients are grateful when a health care provider asks about their dental concerns.
- Potentially serious problems can be addressed early enough to prevent extensive and expensive treatments.