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Sleep and Aging

Older adults need about the same amount of sleep as all adults—7 to 9 hours each night. But, older people tend to go to sleep earlier and get up earlier than they did when they were younger.

There are many reasons why older people may not get enough sleep at night. Feeling sick or being in pain can make it hard to sleep. Some medicines can keep you awake. No matter the reason, if you don't get a good night's sleep, the next day you may:

- Be irritable
- Have memory problems or be forgetful
- Feel depressed

- Have more falls or accidents

Get a Good night's Sleep

Being older doesn't mean you have to be tired all the time. You can do many things to help you get a good night's sleep. Here are some ideas:

Follow a regular sleep schedule.

Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day, even on weekends or when you are traveling.

Avoid napping in the late afternoon or evening, if you can. Develop a bedtime routine. Take time to relax before bedtime each night. Some people

read a book, listen to soothing music, or soak in a warm bath.

Try not to watch television or use your computer, cell phone, or tablet in the bedroom. The light from these devices may make it difficult for you to fall asleep. Keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature, not too hot or too cold, and as quiet as possible.

Use low lighting in the evenings and as you prepare for bed.

Exercise at regular times each day but not within 3 hours of your bedtime.

Avoid eating large meals close to bedtime—they can keep you awake.

Stay away from caffeine late in the day. Caffeine (found in coffee, tea, soda, and chocolate) can keep you awake.

Remember—alcohol won't help you sleep. Even small amounts make it harder to stay asleep.

Insomnia Is Common in Older Adults

Insomnia is the most common sleep problem in adults age 60 and older. People with this condition have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. Insomnia can last for days, months, and even years.

Often, being unable to sleep becomes a habit. Some people worry about not sleeping even before they get into bed. This may make it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Some older adults who have trouble sleeping may use over-the-counter sleep aids. Others may use prescription medicines to help them sleep. These medicines may help when used for a short time. But remember, medicines aren't a cure for insomnia.

Sleep Apnea

People with sleep apnea have short pauses in breathing while they are asleep. These pauses may happen many times during the night. If not treated, sleep apnea can lead to other problems, such as high blood pressure, stroke, or memory loss.

You can have sleep apnea and not even know it. Feeling sleepy during the day and being told you are snoring loudly at night

could be signs that you have sleep apnea.

Movement Disorders and Sleep

People with restless legs syndrome, or RLS, feel like there is tingling, crawling, or pins and needles in one or both legs. This feeling is worse at night. See your doctor for more information about medicines to treat RLS.

Periodic limb movement disorder, or PLMD, causes people to jerk and kick their legs every 20 to 40 seconds during sleep. Medication, warm baths, exercise, and relaxation exercises can help.

Rapid eye movement, or REM, sleep behavior disorder is another condition that may make it harder to get a good night's sleep. During normal REM sleep, your muscles cannot move, so your body stays still. But, if you have REM sleep behavior disorder, your muscles can move and your sleep is disrupted.

Tips to Help You Fall Asleep

You may have heard about some tricks to help you fall asleep. You don't really have to count sheep—you could try counting slowly to 100. Some people find that playing mental games makes them sleepy. For example, tell yourself it is 5 minutes before you have to get up, and you're just trying to get a little bit more sleep.

Some people find that relaxing their bodies puts them to sleep. One way to do this is to imagine your toes are completely relaxed, then your feet, and then your ankles are completely relaxed. Work your way up the rest of your body, section by section. You may drift off to sleep before getting to the top of your head.

Use your bedroom only for sleeping. After turning off the light, give yourself about 20 minutes to fall asleep. If you're still awake and not drowsy, get out of bed. When you feel sleepy, go back to bed.

If you feel tired and unable to do your activities for more than 2 or 3 weeks, you may have a sleep problem. Talk with your doctor about changes you can make to get a better night's sleep.

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The Seniors Guide to Dental Care

By Matthew Solan

The eyes may be the gateway to your soul, but oral health is a window into overall health. “Good dental health not only protects against gum disease, gum inflammation, and tooth loss, but also can protect against many other age-related diseases,” says Dr. Len Brennan of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine. “A healthy mouth really can lead to a healthier body.”

Poor oral health can have severe consequences. Research has shown that gum inflammation (gingivitis) raises the risk for lung disease, heart disease, blood vessel blockage, and strokes.

Tooth loss from gum disease (periodontitis) may raise your risk of dementia. In the October 2021 issue of the *JAMDA: The Journal of Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine*, researchers looked at 14 studies and found that older adults who had lost more than one tooth had

an almost 50% higher risk of developing cognitive impairment and a 28% higher risk of being diagnosed with dementia.

Poor dental health also can affect your social life. “Insecurities about your smile can make you feel less attractive and less likely to socialize, which can increase isolation,” says Dr. Brennan.

Making sense of sensitive teeth and dry mouth

Two common dental problems many older adults face are sensitive teeth and dry mouth. Tooth sensitivity often occurs when you eat or drink hot or cold food. A typical cause is gum shrinkage, which exposes more of a tooth’s root. Grinding your teeth when you sleep also can cause sensitivity, so you may need to use a mouth guard at night. A dry mouth means you produce less saliva, which makes tasting, chewing, swallowing, and

even talking difficult. Dry mouth also is a common side effect of many medications and is linked with such health conditions as diabetes, stroke, Alzheimer's, and autoimmune diseases. Because both sensitive teeth and dry mouth have many different causes, check with your dentist to find the source of your problem.

Rinse, brush, floss

Like other aspects of health care, prevention is the best medicine when it comes to your teeth and gums. "Investing in proper dental care and upkeep is relatively inexpensive," says Dr. Brennan. "Dental treatments are where it can get costly."

He recommends seeing your dentist every six months for check-ups, x-rays as needed, and cleanings. In between, you should follow a daily dental hygiene routine to reduce plaque buildup, gingivitis, and cavities. There are three basic steps: rinsing, brushing, and flossing.

Rinsing. Before you brush, rinse with plain water to dislodge food particles. After brushing, you can rinse again with an over-the-counter alcohol-free mouthwash with fluoride, which can help protect against tooth decay. Some products can reduce tooth sensitivity. Ask your pharmacist for a suggestion. If you have trouble controlling plaque, gingivitis, bad breath, or dry mouth, speak with your dentist about a therapeutic mouthwash.

Brushing. Brush at least twice a day for no less than two minutes each time. Choose a toothpaste with the American Dental Association (ADA) Seal of Acceptance, which verifies it contains decay- and plaque-fighting fluoride. Toothpastes come in gel, paste, or powder forms. While the ingredients can differ slightly, all toothpastes contain the same general components: mild abrasives, humectants, flavoring agents, thickening agents, and detergents.

Some brands also contain other ingredients that might reduce tooth sensitivity or tartar buildup, prevent enamel erosion, or whiten teeth. Ask your dentist for a recommendation for these specific issues.

"Natural" toothpastes also are popular, but again look for the ADA seal. Natural

means certain ingredients are omitted, such as artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, and sweeteners. It also means that certain active ingredients that help with cleaning are derived from plant sources.

Select a brush with soft or extra-soft bristles. Replace toothbrushes every three to four months, or more often if the strands are visibly matted or frayed.

When brushing, tilt the brush at a 45° angle. Beginning with the upper teeth, take several up-and-down short strokes from the gum line to the bottom of the tooth. Do one tooth at a time before moving on to the next. To clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth, hold the brush vertically and make several up-and-down strokes. Repeat the process for the lower teeth.

Flossing. It doesn't matter if you floss before or after brushing, according to Dr. Brennan. "But also try to floss more than once daily, if possible, preferably after a meal to reduce bacteria buildup in the mouth."

You can use either waxed or unwaxed floss. People with particularly tight teeth may find waxed floss easier to use, but both kinds work the same.

Wrap the floss around your middle fingers, which helps you to reach the back teeth. Loop the floss around each tooth, so it makes a C shape. Beginning at the gum line, slide it up and down the tooth several times. Avoid just moving the floss back and forth in a sawing motion. Not only do you miss cleaning the entire tooth, but the friction can irritate the gums.

"If gum bleeding occurs, that doesn't mean you should stop flossing," says Dr. Brennan. "Instead, just be more gentle around that area."

If traditional flossing is difficult, you can try over-the-counter tools, such as dental picks, floss picks, pre-threaded flossers, tiny brushes that reach between the teeth (which are especially helpful to get under crowns and bridges), and water flossers.

Matthew Solan, Executive Editor, Harvard Men's Health Watch



Denture Care And Maintenance

People who lose their teeth due to cavities or gum disease may need dentures. Dentures take the place of missing teeth. You need to care for dentures the same as natural teeth — with proper brushing and cleaning twice a day. Dental cleansers also help remove plaque and stains.

What are dentures?

Dentures are a type of removable dental appliance that takes the place of missing teeth. They help you chew and speak better. They also improve your smile and appearance. You may hear people refer to dentures as false, artificial or fake teeth. Prosthodontists are dentists who specialize in teeth replacement.

Who might need dentures?

People over 60 are more likely to get dentures, but anyone might need this dental appliance. You might need dentures if you lose teeth due to:

- Cavities (tooth decay).

- Facial injury.
- Gum disease or receding gums.

What are the types of dentures?

Your healthcare provider will recommend the best denture type based on how many teeth are missing. Your provider may use denture types including:

Complete: These dentures rest on the gums. They replace a complete row of teeth on the upper gums, lower gums or both.

Partial: These dentures replace one or more missing teeth. The dentures attach to existing teeth or sometimes to dental implants (titanium screws).

Fixed partial: Also called dental bridges, fixed partial dentures permanently attach to surrounding teeth. Only a dental expert can remove a fixed partial denture or bridge.

How should I clean my dentures?

Dentures require daily cleanings just like natural teeth. You need to remove dentures from your mouth to clean

them (unless you have a fixed partial denture). For proper denture care and cleaning, you should:

- Take care of gums and teeth. Brush your gums, tongue and roof of your mouth, along with any natural teeth every morning and night. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Clean dentures over a towel on the bathroom counter or a sink filled with water. This way, dentures are less likely to break if you accidentally drop them.
- Apply a small amount of hand soap, mild dish-washing liquid or denture cleanser to a soft-bristled brush made specifically for dentures. Do not use toothpaste or a regular toothbrush. These products are abrasive and can scratch the plastic material on dentures.
- If you won't be wearing the dentures again right away, place them in a container of cool water or a denture-cleansing solution. Dentures that dry out can permanently lose their shape.
- Always rinse dentures after brushing and especially after soaking to get rid of the cleaning solution.

What else can I do to care for my dentures?

With proper care and maintenance, dentures can last up to seven years. Occasionally, your dentist may need to refit the denture base or make a new one using the teeth in the existing dentures. To

ensure your dentures last, you should:

- Remove and rinse off dentures after every meal or snack.
- Never place dentures in hot water.

The heat can warp the plastic denture material.

- Try not to sleep while wearing dentures. Instead, place them in a glass of cool water overnight.
- Consider occasionally using an ultrasonic cleaner. This device sends sound waves through a liquid denture cleanser. The sound waves dislodge food and other deposits.
- Don't try to fix broken dentures using over-the-counter repair kits or glue. You may irreparably damage the appliance. Instead, schedule an appointment with your dentist.

- See your dentist if you develop mouth sores, gum irritation or an infection. Your dentist can adjust the dentures for a better fit. Don't try to adjust dentures yourself. You could break them.
- Don't use bleach products or whitening toothpaste to whiten dentures. Bleach can weaken dentures and change their color. Plus, the plastic on dentures won't whiten. You can minimize staining with proper brushing or soaking in denture cleanser.
- Get regular dental check-ups to protect gum health, prevent cavities in remaining teeth and ensure proper denture fit.

Denture care “do’s”

Tip 1: Handling. Be gentle

While your denture is durable and built to last, it's important to always handle with care, especially when cleaning it. Too much pressure or harsh scrubbing can wear down or break your denture.

Tip 2: Rinsing dentures. Freshen up

After eating with your denture or storing your denture overnight, rinse your denture. Remember, cleaning and denture storing solutions are not intended for your mouth, so rinse it with water to keep your mouth happy and healthy.

After eating: gently brush your denture with a soft brush to remove debris.

Tip 3: Storing dentures. Soak n' sleep

To preserve the durability, shape and fit of your denture, it needs moisture. So, whenever you're not using it, store it in water, or clean it and store it in denture-storing solution before sleeping. Never sleep with it in unless instructed by your dentist.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Independent You is committed to providing compassionate and high-quality care for our clients. We believe that our success is rooted in our caregivers that continue to exemplify patience, empathy, and respect towards their clients.

We would like to recognize **Elena L.** as our Caregiver of the Month for December. Elena has been with Independent You for over 2 years, and she is continually praised for her work ethic and always going the extra mile with her client. We are fortunate to have Elena at our company and we appreciate all she does.



We also recognize **Abigail H.** as our Caregiver of the Month for January. Abigail has a heart for caregiving, and she is dedicated to the comfort, dignity, and safety of her client. Abigail takes on the challenges of caregiving with a positive and caring attitude.

Thank you, Abigail, for all you do!

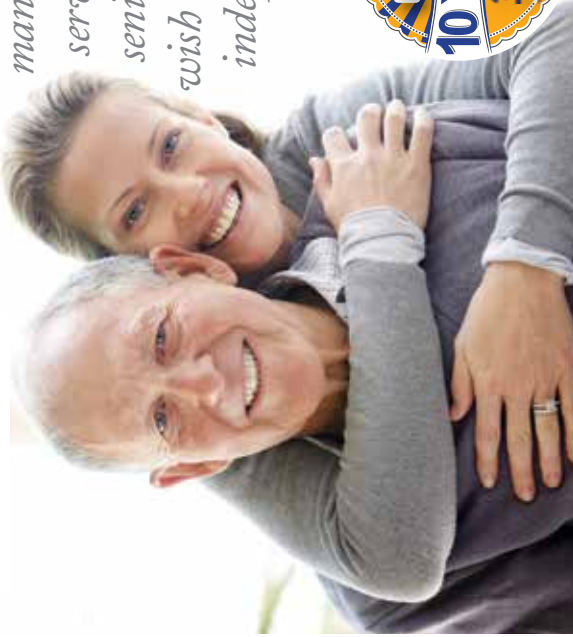
We are thankful for Elena L. and Abigail H. as well as all our extraordinary caregivers who are dedicated to great care and comfort to our clients.





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