



OralLongevity™ Outline for Consumer Presentation:

Staying Healthy for a Lifetime

The American Dental Association and GSK Consumer Health Care have teamed up to provide today's program on OralLongevity™. My goal is to provide information to help you stay healthy for the rest of your life. We know that many older adults are healthier and keeping their teeth longer and looking better than ever before. Today we will talk about choices you can make to stay healthy while you grow older.

As you know, teeth are important for speaking, smiling, eating well, and looking younger, and it is important to see your dentist regularly, whether you have your own teeth or wear dentures. Bacteria in your mouth can destroy your teeth and gums and spread throughout your body, complicating serious medical conditions. Infections in your mouth may be associated with heart disease, stroke, diabetes, pneumonia and other health problems. Although we are not sure if treating an oral disease will improve a specific health problem, we know that a healthy mouth is important for overall health, and overall health is important for a healthy mouth,

In today's program we will:

- Describe some of the changes that happen in your mouth as you get older,
- Discuss how staying healthy can help you keep your teeth,
- Discuss some of the links between your mouth and body,
- Describe ways to take care of your mouth , AND
- Discuss ways to help family and friends when they have difficulty taking care of themselves.

So let's get started!

Getting Older

A. What to expect as you get older

- a. It's no longer a sure thing that as you grow older you'll lose your teeth.
- b. With regular dental care and healthy habits, your teeth can last a lifetime.
- c. You're never too old to have your teeth fixed or replaced.
- d. If you've lost some or all of your natural teeth you have options to replace them.

However:

- i. If you lose teeth and don't have them replaced, it can lead to problems.
- ii. Teeth can shift into the open spaces, and your bite can change & cause joint problems, i.e., clicking, popping or headaches
- iii. When teeth aren't replaced, your face may change, and it may not be as easy to chew or speak

B. As you age, there are changes to your teeth.

- a. **The good news** is that over time, the nerves inside your teeth become smaller and less sensitive so fillings and other procedures can be more comfortable than in the past.
- b. **The bad news** is since your nerves are less sensitive, by the time you feel pain, more damage may have occurred. It is always easier to save a tooth when a problem is noticed early.
 - i. Never wait until your mouth hurts to visit your dentist.
 - ii. Schedule regular check-ups as recommended by your dentist.

C. You can get cavities even if you have not had any for years! As you get older, you're entering your second round of "cavity prone years."

- a. You may be getting cavities now because of:
 - i. Side effects of medications – dry mouth (not a normal sign of aging!)
 - ii. Old and worn out fillings
 - iii. Health or habit changes
- b. Fluoride is good for you and can help maintain healthy teeth – at every age.
 - i. Fluoride comes from several sources
 - 1) Bottle water (check the label for fluoride content)
 - 2) Fluoride toothpaste (look for the ADA Seal)
 - 3) Community optimally fluoridated water systems

D. Regular dental visits are important. The early stages of most diseases do NOT cause pain. It is always better to treat early.

- a. Dental checkups are important for those with teeth and those without any natural teeth.
- b. Dentists/ dental hygienists can check for:
 - i. Mouth cancer – Red, white, mixed, painless in early stages
 - 1) It can happen to those with or without natural teeth. Early detection can be a life saver.
 - ii. Cavities – Broken teeth, fillings and new cavities –painless in early stages

iii. Gum problems – gingivitis and periodontal disease

1) Without excellent daily mouth care, your gums can get infected, and will not cause pain or discomfort in its early phase.

E. What to bring when you go to the dentist:

- a. Updated list of medications and over the counter drugs, vitamins, herbal remedies
- b. Updated list of all medical conditions and allergies
- c. Name and telephone number of all physicians and health care providers
- d. Name and telephone number of your emergency contact and the individual who can make decisions for you in case of a medical emergency
- e. Dental insurance or Medicaid card.
- f. Dentures or partials – even if you don't wear them.
- g. If helpful, bring a friend or family member to help and support you.

Be honest about your habits, behaviors, finances and other concerns.

How to Stay Healthy for a Lifetime – Links Between a Healthy Mouth and a Healthy Body. “You're not healthy without good oral health.” (US Surgeon General Koop)

A. Mouth to Body to Mouth

Mouth infections can be more serious in diabetics and may be associated with heart disease, stroke and pneumonia in older adults.

- a. Heart concerns:
 - i. Infective endocarditis is a severe heart infection, while uncommon it can be fatal.
- b. Pneumonia
 - i. Bacteria from plaque in the mouth have been identified with pneumonia in hospitalized patients and residents of long-term care facilities.
- c. Coumadin or blood thinners
 - i. Precautions may be needed before teeth cleaning, gum surgery or extractions.
- d. Diabetics
 - i. Be sure to eat before your dental appointment.
 - ii. You may take longer to heal.
 - iii. Gum disease is associated with uncontrolled blood sugar levels. Immediate treatment is needed for uncontrolled blood sugar levels, but keeping levels controlled is critical.
- e. Dementia-related conditions
 - i. Disrupted thought processes, increased difficulty with communication and self-care
 - ii. Difficulty expressing pain/discomfort, or providing good daily care.
 - iii. May require more frequent checkups and cleanings.
- f. Other drugs requiring additional attention prior to treatment
 - i. Bone strengthening drugs to treat cancer and/or osteoporosis.

B. Mouth Cancer Kills. Early detection can save your life.

Mouth cancer is common in older adults! You are at a greater risk now than earlier in your life. And cancer is not painful in its early phase.

- a. How to reduce your risk of getting mouth cancer:
 - i. Stop using tobacco
 - ii. Reduce alcohol intake if heavy
 - iii. Stay out of the sun, and wear sunscreen when you are in the sun.
 - iv. Have your dentist/dental hygienist examine your mouth regularly.

C. Having a dry mouth can be a serious problem, but it is NOT due to your age!

- a. Saliva (spit) is one of your most precious fluids. It helps you to:
 - i. Breakdown foods, fight disease, keep your mouth moist, help you to speak, eat, chew, wear dentures
- b. Without saliva – or having a dry mouth – can be a serious problem.
 - i. Cracked lips and frequent cold sores, difficulty chewing, having to drink while eating or talking can be a sign of having a dry mouth.
 - ii. You are more likely to get cavities, bleeding gums, bad breath and have a hard time wearing a denture
- c. A dry mouth is often a side effect of taking a medication.
 - i. Common medicines that can dry your mouth include: allergy and asthma medications, blood pressure pills, water pills, cholesterol pills, pain medication, anxiety and depression drugs, and many others.
 - ii. If you find that your mouth is dry, notify your dentist and physician immediately
 1. Ask for an alternative medicine, a smaller dose or a change in frequency – which may help reduce the drying effect
 2. Sip on water throughout the day – don't wait to be thirsty.
 3. Get some over the counter moisturizers, suck on sugar-free candies or chew sugar-free gum.
 4. If you have your own teeth, get regular fluoride treatments and use fluoride regularly at home (ask your dentist for a recommendation)

D. Eat well, chew slowly and let your dentist and physician know when there is a problem.

- a. Good food choices will help your whole body
- b. You need fewer calories as you get older
 - i. Avoid those foods with calories but no nutrition (empty calories)
- c. If you experience pain when eating or sensitivity to hot or cold foods – see your dentist.

E. Take care of yourself! Healthy habits promote a happy and healthy life.

- a. Brush your teeth every day, *at least* twice a day.
- b. Use a toothbrush with a small head and SOFT bristles
 - i. Replace your toothbrush when the bristles start to flare or fan out.
- c. Use a fluoride toothpaste (with an ADA seal of Approval)

- d. Use dental floss or an interdental cleaner every day.
 - i. There are many types of floss, use the one you like the best.
 - ii. To help you floss, try floss-holders, floss-picks and/or floss-threaders
- e. If you have difficulty holding a toothbrush or getting toothpaste out of the tube, try:
 - i. An electric toothbrush
 - ii. Add a tennis ball or bicycle handle to the handle of your toothbrush.
 - iii. Get toothpaste in a pump, not a squeeze tube
- f. Caring for your denture or partial denture
 - i. Dentures and partial dentures need to be removed from your mouth and cleaned every day.
 - ii. Use a denture brush for dentures.
 - 1. The bristles are harder and stiffer than a toothbrush, which is better for dentures.
 - iii. Brush dentures under running water, then soak them in a container with an effervescent denture cleaner (do not use regular toothpaste).
 - 1. Denture cleaners help to remove bacteria and stains from dentures.
 - iv. Clean your mouth after you take the denture out.
 - 1. Use a soft bristled toothbrush for your natural teeth.
 - 2. Use a face cloth or gauze squares or a soft toothbrush to gently clean your tongue and palate. Be careful not to gag yourself.

Helping to Care for Others Needing Assistance

Helping your spouse, parent, friend or loved one stay healthy is an important responsibility. Helping others with their daily care is both challenging and rewarding. It is important to determine who is responsible for treatment and financial decisions early on to ensure needed care is provided on a timely basis. Caregiving requires creativity, patience and persistence.

A. Your goal is to help maintain skills and self-reliance as long as possible.

- i. Begin by observing and supervising to allow for maximum independence.
- ii. Start with easy steps with frequent breaks.
- iii. Non-verbal communication is very important for building trust.
 - 1. Maintain eye contact, smile and check on their comfort frequently.
 - 2. If they resist, stop and try another time during the day.
- iv. It takes longer than caring for your own mouth.
 - 1. Start with short sessions and extend them over time, while each of you become more comfortable.
 - 2. Start with easy steps and take frequent breaks.
 - 3. It may take several sessions to get the whole mouth clean.

- v. Before helping, ask for their permission to help them understand your role.
 1. Explain each step, frequently tell them they are doing well, and thank them for helping you to help them.
 2. Unless they have a hearing problem, do not speak too loudly.
- vi. Wear gloves, a mask and protective eyewear.
 1. Drape a towel on their chest to protect their clothing
 2. Use good lighting – a flashlight might be needed.

B. Schedule regular dental check-ups, at least twice a year.

- i. More frequent appointments may be necessary – the dentist will advise you.
- ii. Inform the dentist/dental hygienist of the Daily Oral Care Plan
- iii. Demonstrate your daily care techniques to ensure completeness.

C. Make appropriate treatment choices, when authorized.

- i. Work closely with the dentist
- ii. Knowing their previous patterns of dental care can help guide decision making.
- iii. Ask if you are unsure about treatment options.
 1. Remember age alone is not a good basis for making treatment decisions.
- iv. Consider the following when making treatment decisions:
 1. What would they have chosen?
 2. What is in their best interest?
 3. Respect and preserve their comfort, hygiene and dignity.

How to Get More Information on Dentistry and Oral Health

Learning more about oral health care is easy. There are many great resources on the web that are written specifically for older adults.

- Start with the American Dental Association’s website at www.ADA.org. Here you’ll find a wide variety of dental topics
- To find information on dry mouth, oral cancer and a variety of other topics, you can visit the National Institutes of Health at www.nidcr.nih.gov
- At the Special Care Dentistry Association, at www.SCDonline.org, you’ll find information on consumer products.
- Product manufacturers offer helpful information at: www.GSK.com
- On the US Department of Agriculture’s website, you’ll find the latest information on dietary guidelines at www.mypyramid.gov/guidelines/index.html

In summary:

- Maintaining oral health is important especially as you age
- Providing oral care for others contributes to their health and quality of life
- Regular maintenance and routine check-ups help keep your mouth and your body healthy.
- Incorporate healthy habits into your lifestyle.
- You’re never too old for a beautiful smile.

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