

MANDATORY DAILY MOUTH CARE FOR SENIORS: IT'S TIME



For the first time in Canadian history, people ages 65 and older outnumber those under 15 years of age. Some key challenges to maintaining good oral health as we age include restricted mobility, cognitive impairments, health conditions that compound oral problems and complicate treatment, and financial constraints. In addition, regulatory inconsistencies between government jurisdictions and a lack of standards for oral health care within residential facilities and in homecare settings have a negative effect on the oral health of seniors.

Numerous studies have identified significant oral health concerns, including high rates of periodontal disease (gum disease), root caries (cavities), and poorly fitting dentures, among seniors. These findings are particularly concerning when we consider that most oral diseases can be prevented. It is also well established that overall health and well-being can be affected considerably by the quality of one's oral health. Provision of oral health care supports pain-free eating, speaking, socializing, and optimal overall health and quality of life.

Canada's health system must adapt to the evolving needs of our aging population.

SENIORS' ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH CARE

The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) believes that all Canadians, including seniors, must have access to oral health care. CDHA recommends that all levels of government take action to ensure that:

**LONG-TERM CARE AND HOMECARE REGULATIONS
AND STANDARDS INCLUDE DAILY MOUTH CARE SERVICES.**

Dental hygienists are primary health care providers with expertise in oral health promotion and disease prevention. They can play a key role in providing baseline and ongoing oral assessments for seniors, developing individualized daily mouth care plans, and making appropriate referrals when necessary.



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