



# Seniors – Save Your Smile!

Oral health among U.S. seniors has never been better. In fact, today’s American over age 65 has an average of 19 of their own teeth, compared to only seven in 1960.<sup>1</sup>

To help maintain a healthy smile, keep these tips in mind:

**Risk:** The incidence of gum disease is greater among older adults. Symptoms may include bleeding, tender or swollen gums, loose teeth and bad breath.



**Tip:** Regular flossing and daily brushing can help minimize or prevent gum disease.



**Risk:** Some medications or medical conditions cause dry mouth due to a lack of saliva. Saliva has anti-bacterial properties and helps protect against tooth decay.



**Tip:** Drink water, chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless candy to help restore moisture. Your dentist may also recommend mouth rinses or artificial saliva.



**Risk:** Receding gums can result in the tooth root being exposed and susceptible to decay.



**Tip:** Using fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinses can help prevent or reduce cavities on root surfaces.



**Risk:** Tobacco and alcohol use can increase your chance for tooth-related problems, mask gum inflammation and increase the risk of developing oral cancer.



**Tip:** It’s never too late to quit and reduce these risks.



**Risk:** Dental decay is still common among older adults.



**Tip:** Keep your smile healthy by brushing at least twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, flossing once daily (especially at bedtime) and visiting the dentist regularly.



<sup>1</sup>The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, 2014.