

We give you  
more reasons to  
**smile**

# Take a Bite Out of Life!

## Healthy Aging® Month<sup>1</sup>



Today's older adults are keeping their natural teeth longer due to scientific developments and the dental industry's emphasis on prevention. Among persons aged 55 to 64, the rate of toothlessness has dropped 60% since 1960!<sup>2</sup> In addition, technology has provided many different ways to replace missing teeth – rather than settling for stained, chipped, missing, or misshapen teeth.

### *Seniors Face Unique Dental Challenges.*

Adults of all ages can have cavities. But older adults are more likely to have decay around older fillings, and decay of the tooth root itself. In addition, plaque builds up faster and in greater amounts as we age.<sup>3</sup> Reduced dexterity and mobility may make daily oral hygiene habits more difficult. Medical or even mental conditions may present additional challenges to maintaining or receiving regular care. And, seniors are more susceptible to oral diseases such as oral cancer.

Gum disease continues to be a threat since lack of awareness about available treatments and techniques may lead older patients to make false assumptions about their dental health – and tolerate conditions such as toothaches and bleeding gums. Vision or hearing loss may reduce a patient's ability to cope with stress or communicate clearly. As the number of older patients increases steadily<sup>3</sup>, dentists are gaining practical information on how to effectively manage their treatment needs.

#### **“Dry mouth” may not be a normal consequence of aging.<sup>3</sup>**

Medication is the most common culprit of dry mouth; but it may also be the first sign of a systemic problem or disease. Ask your dentist if you are concerned about dry mouth.

#### **Missing that Satisfying Crunch?**

Maintaining proper nutrition is important for everyone, young or old; but many older adults do not eat balanced diets.

- Some avoid certain foods because they have trouble chewing or swallowing due to painful teeth, ill-fitting dentures, dry mouth, or changes in facial muscles.
- Others find their sense of taste has changed, sometimes due to disease or certain medications.

Because of these and other factors, the diets of older adults are often lacking in calcium, protein and other nutrients essential to dental and overall health.<sup>4</sup>

Seeing your dentist regularly can help you protect your ability to chew for years to come.



<sup>1</sup>Education Television Network

<sup>2</sup>National Institute of Dental & Craniofacial research survey cited at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org),

<sup>3</sup>[www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)

<sup>4</sup>University of Iowa study, published in JADA, Oct. 2002, cited at [ada.org](http://ada.org)

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## *Fundamental ways of improving your oral health*

- **Don't skip routine dental care.** Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams.<sup>3</sup>
  - Brush your teeth at least twice a day.
  - Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner.<sup>3</sup>
- **Replace your toothbrush every 3 or 4 months.** Or sooner if the bristles become frayed. A worn toothbrush will not do a good job of cleaning your teeth.<sup>3</sup>
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking or chewing tobacco increases the risk of periodontal disease.
- **Watch your diet.** Eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks.<sup>3</sup>

## *Discounts Especially for You*

Through Healthy Rewards<sup>®</sup>, CIGNA Dental members get access to a full range of health & wellness programs\* and services often not covered by traditional benefit plans including:

### **CHIROPRACTIC CARE**

Relief from pain, better mobility and improved circulation are proven benefits of this time-honored method.

### **HEARING CARE**

Save on hearing aids and hearing tests. Screenings are free.

### **VISION SERVICES**

Discounts on frames, lenses and contacts at thousands of eye care locations nationwide.

To find a Healthy Rewards<sup>®</sup> provider, simply call **1.800.870.3470**, or visit [www.cigna.com](http://www.cigna.com). You must use your CIGNA Dental ID to receive the discount.

\*Some Healthy Rewards are not available in all states, including The Optical Shop in California for HMO members. Additionally, not all Healthy Rewards programs are available to members of CIGNA Dental Health of California, Inc. and CIGNA Behavioral Health of California, Inc. **A discount program is NOT insurance, and the member must pay the entire discounted charge.**



## *Smile Solutions for Older Adults*

Good oral hygiene and regular dental care are important whatever your age. Even if you no longer have your natural teeth, you should see your dentist regularly. The dentist will examine your mouth to check for any problem with the gum ridges, the tongue and the joints of the jaw, as well as screen for oral cancer.<sup>3</sup> By practicing good oral hygiene at home and visiting your dentist regularly, you can prevent dental problems and save time and money. In the process, you can save your teeth and gums!

*For more information, visit us on the web at [www.cigna.com](http://www.cigna.com)*

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Mature Dental Care – Healthy Aging Month

Healthy Rewards discounts also available for laser surgery, acupuncture, massage therapy, fitness club memberships, health & wellness products, magazine discounts, vitamins and herbal supplements, smoking cessation, Weight Watchers<sup>®</sup> and more!