

# NEWS FROM AROUND THE PROBE

## Senior Health:

### The wise old owl gives a hoot about his teeth

Most seniors have become smarter about oral hygiene and are more likely to keep their teeth throughout their lifetime than they were a decade ago.

The Centers for Disease Control reports about 70 percent of adults 65 years old and older have their natural teeth. However, oral health is often an overlooked component of many seniors' general health and well-being.

Studies indicate that seniors have the highest rates of periodontal disease, a chronic bacterial infection that can damage the gums and bone supporting the teeth. But don't think gum disease is an automatic condition of aging. Research suggests these higher rates may be related to risk factors other than age.

Periodontal diseases may be aggravated by medical conditions such as diabetes and osteoporosis. Memory problems and depression, which often leads to less attention to oral hygiene, and arthritis, which can make brushing and flossing more difficult, may also contribute to the disease.

Most importantly, recent research has found that periodontal diseases are linked to a number of major health conditions such as heart and respiratory diseases, diabetes, and stroke (some of the major illnesses among senior citizens).

What does all of this mean? As you get older, it's more important than ever to seek regular dental care. Routine oral hygiene will decrease your risk for periodontal disease, which in turn, allows you to keep your natural teeth a lifetime as well as possibly lower your risk of a heart attack.

So give a hoot about your teeth, and discuss your oral health with your dentist or periodontist today.

*For more information, visit [www.perio.org](http://www.perio.org)*

## Oral Hygiene Tips for the Young at Heart

Even if you've managed to avoid periodontal disease until now, it is especially important to practice a meticulous oral care routine as you get older.

### **Follow these tips to help ensure your teeth will last a lifetime.**

**Brush and floss at least two times a day.** Removing plaque from your teeth and gums every day can help prevent periodontal disease.

**Clean removable partial dentures daily and remove them at night to avoid bacterial growth.**

**Visit your dentist or periodontist at least twice a year to remove calculus from places your toothbrush and floss cannot reach.** These visits also provide the opportunity for early detection of periodontal disease and pre-cancerous lesions.

**Notify your dentist or periodontist of sudden changes in taste and smell.** These should not be considered signs of aging and could be causes of serious medical problems.

**Limit alcohol intake.** Extreme alcohol consumption is a risk factor for oral and throat cancers.

**Avoid or limit tobacco use.** In addition to the general health risks posed by tobacco use, smokers have seven times the risk of developing gum disease compared to non-smokers.

**Drink fluoridated water and use fluoride toothpaste to protect your teeth against dental decay.**

**Eat a balanced diet.** Some seniors prefer soft, easily chewed food, which can take a toll on nutrition.

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variation in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM for a free brochure on periodontal disease.

*Source: AAP Patient Page, May/June 2002, Vol. 3, No. 3*



**PAM BERLANGA, D.D.S.**

PRACTICE LIMITED TO PERIODONTICS AND IMPLANTOLOGY

5419 FREDERICKSBURG ROAD SAN ANTONIO, TX 78229

OFFICE 210.616.0980 FAX 210.614.1122 • PAGER 210.506.0170

OAKHILLSPERIODONTICS.COM