

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey understands that my dentist can help me smile into retirement and beyond.



## Aging and Dental Care

### **Age is one of many factors that can affect your smile.**

As you age, the amount of saliva in your mouth is reduced, making your mouth, teeth and gums more susceptible to cavities and periodontal disease. Certain prescription medicines may also decrease the amount of saliva. If left untreated, dry mouth can lead to tooth loss and other problems, including gum and bone recession and bad breath. Many medications can also reduce saliva production, so older patients need to tell their dentist if they suffer from dry mouth.

People age 55 to 74 have higher rates of periodontal disease. Older patients' immune systems are not as strong as their younger counterparts making dental problems, like periodontal disease, harder to manage. Seeing your dentist regularly can improve your chances of early detection of periodontal disease.

People suffering from arthritis may have trouble brushing their teeth. Stiff, painful hands and fingers make it difficult to hold a toothbrush and clean teeth properly. People who have arthritis may find it useful to enlarge the handle of a toothbrush with tape. An electric toothbrush may also make cleaning easier.

Advances in oral health, such as dental implants and fluoride treatments, can preserve teeth for those who suffer from arthritis or tooth loss due to decay or periodontal disease.

Tell your dentist about any health problems and medications you are taking to help ensure the most appropriate dental treatments.

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# See your dentist at the first signs of change to your mouth.

- Pain
- Tenderness or numbness
- Gums that bleed easily or are red and swollen
- A swelling, lump, thickening or rough spot
- Crust or small-eroded area anywhere in or around the mouth or neck
- White or red patches in the mouth or on the lips
- A sore that bleeds easily or does not heal
- A change in the way your teeth fit together
- Difficulty in chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the jaw or tongue
- Chipped or loose teeth

Be sure to visit your dentist regularly ...  
it can improve your overall health.

Sources: Academy of General Dentistry  
American Dental Association  
WebMD®