

## Regular visits to the dentist may do more than brighten your smile.

*Research has associated gum (periodontal) disease with complications for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes and other health issues. However, lack of awareness about available treatments and techniques may lead older patients to make false assumptions about their dental health. This means they may not seek help for conditions such as toothaches and bleeding gums, or they may assume they don't need to visit the dentist at all since they wear dentures.*



- **Ensure that fillings and dentures remain secure.** 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>1</sup> Your dentist can examine any fillings for surrounding decay, or to determine whether any have become defective. Your dentist can also see if your dentures continue to fit properly.
- **Avoid/treat bad breath or dry mouth.** “Dry mouth” may not be a normal consequence of aging<sup>1</sup> and can also impact denture-wearers. Medication is the most common culprit of dry mouth; but it may also be the first sign of a systemic problem or disease. Dry mouth can cause dentures to become loose.<sup>3</sup> Your dentist can treat or identify oral conditions that may increase your risk for these problems.
- **Detect oral cancer early.** Seniors, even those with dentures, may be more susceptible to oral diseases such as oral cancer.<sup>1</sup> Your dentist can examine your mouth for any irregularities that may indicate oral cancer before it becomes advanced.
- **Reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.** People with advanced gum disease may be more likely to have complications for heart disease than those with healthy gums<sup>2</sup> because oral bacteria may cause blood clots. Although you can't guarantee you'll never have a heart attack or stroke, you may be able to reduce your risk by daily brushing and flossing – and following through with any treatment plan your dentist recommends. Partial denture wearers can also be at-risk for gum disease since bacteria can collect wherever a denture contacts a tooth.<sup>3</sup>

There's more to your mouth than teeth and gums.  
Schedule your next check-up today!

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<sup>1</sup>www.ada.org <sup>2</sup>American Academy of Periodontology (www.perio.org), Feb. 2002. <sup>3</sup>www.denturewearers.com “CIGNA Dental” refers to the following operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation: Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. and its operating subsidiaries and affiliates. This document is provided by CIGNA solely for informational purposes to promote consumer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. CIGNA assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations. 08/09 ©2009 CIGNA