

# Generations

## *Active Lifestyles for the 50+ Generation*

Who says that being over the age of 60 means you are on the path to dentures? *NONSENSE.*



Steven H. Becker, DDS

More and more aging Americans are keeping their teeth their entire lives, thanks in part to improved dental care (especially electric/battery-operated tooth brushes) and fluoride in the

water. Not only is good oral hygiene and regular visits to the dentist important to avoid dentures, but it is also important to minimizing the occurrence of gum disease, which is linked to an increased incidence of heart disease and diabetes.

### ***Bleeding Gums & Heart Disease***

According to the Archives of Internal Medicine (as reported in an article by Tedd Mitchell, MD, director of the Wellness Program at the Cooper Clinic in Dallas) there is a relationship between gum disease and C-reactive protein, an inflammatory marker associated with hardening of the arteries, which is a major contributor to heart attacks. This was based on a study of 5000 middle-aged adults. Also, toxins from gum disease also impair the function of the pancreas—directly aggravating diabetes.

One way to know if you are at risk for gingivitis-related illness is to brush your teeth and floss. If your gums bleed easily, you may have gingivitis. A trip to the dentist will determine if you need to have a more thorough cleaning called “scaling,” which will reduce the “pockets” or space that is growing between your teeth and your gums—pockets that can collect food.

Keeping these gaps small is important, since large gaps collect food and bacteria that cause disease. Then more bacteria sets in, further weakening the gum and bone, creating an unstable “anchor” for teeth.

### ***Aging, Abrasion & Cosmetic Options***

With more people keeping their natural teeth well into their 70s and 80s, there is an increased incidence of abrasion being diagnosed in dental offices. Simply, abrasion is just another term that indicates “years of wear.”

As a result of abrasion, many people notice an increased sensitivity to cold and heat, as well as a change in color. In addition to the change in sensitivity, you may notice a notched area at the gum line; and the change in color is just from years of staining and deterioration in the quality and density of the enamel.

Advances in cosmetic dentistry, however, are making it possible to reduce the visual impact of aging. Bleaching is now an in-office procedure that can be done in a matter of hours—reversing years of staining from coffee, tea, cigarettes, and other foods.

Additionally, advances in adhesive materials make it easy and affordable to get veneers (thin slabs of porcelain that are customized to fit on your teeth, as fingernails are applied by a manicurist). Veneers can make teeth look natural and perfect, and most importantly, they protect the tooth surfaces that are deteriorating.

For those who may have only one or two problem teeth that either fell out or need to be pulled for some reason, consider implants as an option to have a full set of teeth without resorting to dentures.

The bottom line is this: don't let your teeth give away your age (or create other health problems). Seek regular care from a reputable dentist and explore your options so you can keep smiling for years and years to come.

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