

How Can Non-Oral Health Professionals Promote Oral Health for Older Adults?

Oral Health



Overall Health

WHY IT MATTERS



Oral health is critical for overall health, well-being, and quality of life.



Oral conditions in older adults are common, preventable, and often overlooked.



Many systemic diseases are linked to oral health, including diabetes and cardiovascular conditions.



Older adults often rely on caregivers, making regular assessments by non-dental HCPs essential.



Proper oral care helps prevent malnutrition, improve speech and social interaction, and maintain dignity.

Common Oral Health Issues in Older Adults



Periodontal (Gum) Disease

- Linked to diabetes, heart disease, and smoking
- Early stages are reversible
- Advanced stages lead to tooth loss



Dental Caries (Tooth Decay)

- Caused by sugary diets, dry mouth, poor oral hygiene
- Common on root surfaces
- Preventable with fluoride use and hygiene



Tooth Loss

- Leads to cognitive decline, poor nutrition
- Replacement via bridges, implants, dentures
- Hygiene critical to prevent recurrence



Oral Hypofunction

- Dry mouth from medication
- Reduced tongue/lip motor function → swallowing & speaking difficulties

The 5-Step Framework:

1

Ask

- Chewing, swallowing, speaking issues
- Sugar, alcohol, tobacco use
- Medication history (linked to dry mouth)

2

Look for Signs

- Poor hygiene, mouth dryness, speech/movement issues

3

Decide

- Conditions which require immediate intervention or referral

4

Act

- Educate patients/caregivers
- Refer for dental, dietary, or tobacco cessation help
- Apply fluoride in primary care if appropriate

5

Document

- Oral health status, constituent of an ageing population, and prevalence of risk factors associated with oral diseases.

Learn More: fdiworlddental.org/educational-module-other-healthcare-professionals