

Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

How Vision Changes as You Age: A Closer Look at Presbyopia

As you've gotten older, you may notice that your vision isn't as sharp as it used to be. Perhaps focusing on nearby objects or reading words on a page is becoming more difficult. This may be due to an eye condition called presbyopia.

Presbyopia is a form of age-related farsightedness caused by loss of stretchiness of the eye's lens. As your lens gets more rigid, it's less able to focus on close-up objects and images.

Before you get worried about the prospect of having presbyopia, know that the condition is considered a natural part of aging and readily treatable.

Treating Presbyopia

If your blurry vision is interfering with the activities you once enjoyed, call your eye doctor. He or she will evaluate your vision and can recommend treatment options if you're diagnosed with presbyopia. Generally, treatments fall into three categories:

1. **Eyeglasses:** "Cheater" reading eyeglasses are readily available over-the-counter and come in a variety of powers or strengths. If your presbyopia is mild, this may be a good starting treatment option. But you may find that you need to buy new pairs with greater powers as your lens gets more rigid. If you need a stronger eyeglass strength or have other eye conditions that can not be corrected with over-the-counter eyeglasses, your doctor may prescribe eyeglasses to help.
2. **Contacts:** Contacts are a popular, prescription-only option to correct presbyopia. Several different types of contacts address presbyopia, and your doctor will share which one(s) he or she recommends.
3. **Surgery:** If eyeglasses or contacts aren't working for you, you and your doctor may discuss surgical options to treat presbyopia. These include refractive surgery (which changes the shape of your cornea), lens implants (involves removing your lens and replacing it with a synthetic lens) and corneal inlays (involves inserting a small ring into the cornea of the eye). These surgeries are not cures for presbyopia, and you may still need corrective lenses to help you see clearly.

Not seeing as clearly? A vision provider and DeltaVision can help. You can locate a provider near you online, or you can call the number on the back of your Delta Dental ID card to speak with a Customer Service representative who can walk you through it.

SOURCES:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TymFxbDLsUO>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/presbyopia/symptoms-causes/syc-20363328>

Dental Health Guide for Women Over 50

Turning 50 is a significant milestone for all of us. But for women, this season of life brings a lot of change that can be challenging to navigate.

Most women experience menopause between age 51 and 52. The hallmark of menopause is sharp hormonal shifts — and these hormonal changes affect many aspects of your health, including your dental health.

Here, we share how menopause may affect your teeth and mouth, and how you can minimize the effects and preserve a great quality of life.

Menopause and Your Dental Health

One of the most common dental health complications associated with menopause is dry mouth. During menopause, your body reduces production of estrogen and progesterone, which are two hormones that (among many other things) affect your ability to produce as much saliva as you did before. Saliva has a lot of benefits to your oral health outside of simply keeping your mouth comfortable: It protects against tooth decay, gum disease and even bad breath.

Aside from menopause, you may find that medications you're taking can cause dry mouth, too.

If you have dry mouth, drinking more water will help. But if you're finding that increasing your water intake alone isn't doing enough, talk to your dentist. He or she will share additional ways you can combat dry mouth.

Another lesser-known condition related to menopause is burning mouth syndrome, which is a burning sensation that can extend from your tongue to your lips, gums, cheeks and throat.

If you are experiencing this burning sensation or any other type of pain, talk to your dentist about ways to relieve it. It's also a good idea to tell your dentist if you are going through menopause. The more your dentist knows about your overall health, the better he or she will be able to treat you.

Osteoporosis Risk and Tooth Loss

Osteoporosis, a disease marked by weakened bones and bone loss, is a major health concern for post-menopausal women. In fact, 80% of the 10 million Americans with osteoporosis are women. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that your teeth are bones, so this condition affects your oral health, too.

Menopause increases your risk for osteoporosis because estrogen is a bone-protecting hormone, and as estrogen drops, your bones lose that protection. This makes your bones susceptible to weakening. In some cases, a simple fall could result in a bone breaking.

Having osteoporosis boosts your risk of losing a tooth by three times. Bone loss in your jaw also increases your gum disease risk. If you have osteoporosis, please make sure your dentist is aware.

Fortunately, there is a lot of you can do to strengthen your bones and keep them healthy throughout menopause and beyond:

- Eating a balanced diet that includes foods rich in bone-building calcium and vitamin D, such as dairy products, spinach and salmon.
- Staying active by walking, swimming and strength training (lifting weights).
- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol to one drink a day.

Maintaining great oral healthcare at home by brushing and flossing will also continue to keep your teeth healthy between dental visits.

Certain Oral Health Risks Increase with Age

Getting older brings wisdom and perhaps some much-earned relaxation, but it also puts you at greater risk for certain health conditions. Specific to your dental health, 68% of adults 65 and older have gum disease, 20% have untreated tooth decay and nearly all have had a cavity.

Simply getting older also increases your risk of oral cancer, with the median age at diagnosis being 62 years old. Although men are at a greater risk for oral cancer than women, smoking and drinking alcohol increase the risk for both men and women.

Seeing Your Dentist Is Your Best Defense

Getting older comes with a new set of health concerns, but some simple strategies can prevent them from interfering with your life. For example, drinking plenty of water is a tried-and-true health practice that will continue to serve you well throughout the years. Another good piece of advice is to talk to your doctor about the side effects associated with any new medications; many medications can cause dental health issues, such as dry mouth, so being prepared with a plan for addressing it will help.

Lastly, maintaining your twice-yearly preventive visits with your dentist is crucial to keeping good oral health. Since original Medicare does not cover routine dental care, consider whether an individual plan or Medicare Advantage with dental is right for you during retirement. Most Delta Dental of Iowa plans cover 100% of preventive dental visits.

These visits not only help your dentist identify any problems early but are also a good opportunity to tell your dentist about any pain or other symptoms (lumps, swelling, etc.) that you're experiencing. Your dentist will help find a solution to get you back to enjoying your life to the fullest.

SOURCES:

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