

# SAY CHEESE! Top 10 Ways to Keep On Smiling After 50

It's a common myth that senior citizens are destined to lose their teeth, as reported by the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD). There is no reason seniors cannot keep their teeth for a lifetime, since tooth loss is simply the result of an oral disease - not the aging process.

Lata Stefano, DDS and owner of Lata Stefano, DDS, Inc. general dentistry practice in Sandusky, Ohio, suggests that maintaining healthy teeth after age 50 is simply a matter of good oral hygiene and regular check-ups. Beautiful smiles are something that don't have to go away with age.

The senior population, which makes up the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, is healthier and has kept more of their natural teeth than prior generations. But there's still room for improvement. Many seniors do not visit a dentist even once a year - one of the key preventive strategies in ensuring that teeth last a lifetime.

Dr. Stefano recommends these top 10 ways to keep your teeth healthy after age 50:

1. See your dentist regularly at least every six months or more often if you have gum disease-gum disease and oral cancer can be detected early on before it does major damage and lead to tooth loss.

2. Invest in a sonic toothbrush - the advances in technology are amazing and it will provide you more plaque control rather than the manual toothbrush. This will lead to less inflammation of the gums, less bleeding and therefore less gingivitis. It could save you money in the long run by avoiding more involved cleaning procedures. The handles are usually wider in diameter too making it easier to grip.

3. Floss, floss, floss - Did I mention to floss? Just once a day is all we ask or use some sort of interdental cleaning aid found in most drug stores. As gums recede, areas between teeth become larger causing food to stick between the teeth. Remember, three out of four people 35 years old and older are affected by some periodontal disease, as stated by the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD).

4. Softer is better - If using a manual toothbrush, choose one with a soft bristle . . . anything harder can damage the gums and cause the gums to recede.

5. Limit sweets - Cut back on sugared drinks, like soda, and minimize sugar use in coffee and tea. Always rinse mouth with water after drinking sugary drinks to cleanse your teeth of the sticky residue.

6. Gum can be good - If you chew gum, chew sugarless because recent studies have shown that chewing sugarless gum stimulates saliva flow which acts as a buffer against the acid that causes tooth decay.

7. Don't forget your tongue - Clean your tongue, it's a haven for bacteria. You'll be amazed at the residue that comes off the tongue. Brushing your tongue is good, but we recommend a tongue cleaning tool, like the Tongue Tool ([www.tonguetool.com](http://www.tonguetool.com)). It is inexpensive, stainless steel, easily washed in a dishwasher and can last a lifetime. Bacteria buildup on the tongue is a leading cause of bad breath also.

8. Brush and brush again - You've heard it for years, and it's not changed . . . brush your teeth at least twice a day and brush properly along all surfaces.

9. Fluoride is vital - Use fluoride toothpaste. This can help

prevent decay on exposed root surfaces that are easily susceptible to decay because there is no protective enamel on the root surface.

10. Ask, ask, ask, - Your dentist is one of your healthcare providers and we are there to help you maintain your oral hygiene. If you have questions about your oral health, don't hesitate to ask your dentist or share your concerns with them. It's better to seek help early rather than wait until there is an emergency situation leading to loss of a tooth.

Regular dental visits are especially important for older people because many suffer from dry mouth, which slows down the flow of saliva. Saliva plays a major role in preventing tooth decay by rinsing away food particles and neutralizing harmful acids. Dry mouth often comes with old age, but can also be caused by medications like antihistamines, decongestants, antidepressants and diuretics. Dry mouth can often be treated by a dentist.

Other resources are Oral Longevity, a new program that Glaxo-Smith-Kline Consumer Healthcare, the ADA (American Dental Association) and the ADA Foundation recently introduced. This program will provide older adults, their families, caregivers and dental practitioners with education and other free resources to increase the awareness of the need for better oral health. Consumers can download the free educational DVD and brochure at [www.orallongevity.ada.org/ada/orallongevity/oral-longevity\\_dvd.asp](http://www.orallongevity.ada.org/ada/orallongevity/oral-longevity_dvd.asp)

For questions about this article or for more information about Lata Stefano, DDS, Inc., visit their web site at [www.drjohnsonandstefano.com](http://www.drjohnsonandstefano.com) or call 419-626-2205.

Dr. Lata Stefano has been practicing dentistry for over a decade and graduated from The Ohio State University College of Dentistry (Go Buckeyes!). She completed her Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency at Case Western Reserve School of Dentistry in Cleveland, Ohio. Since she began practicing dentistry, Dr Stefano has kept up-to-date on many continuing educational classes, ensuring that her patients receive the most comprehensive

and advance dental care, including Invisalign orthodontic care. Dr. Stefano is a member of the American Dental Association, the American Orthodontic Society, the Academy of General Dentistry, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, the Ohio Dental Association and the North Central Ohio Dental Society. Outside the office, Dr Stefano enjoys boating, exercising, and spending time with her husband and two daughters. Call 419-626-2205 or visit [drjohnsonandstefano.com](http://drjohnsonandstefano.com).

## Deciding

Preplanning your funeral is that benefits your entire family you know who to talk to. Please brochure to help answer any free and you'll learn why pre

Serving Our Community Since 1902

# GROFF

FUNERAL HOMES

Yes, I'd like more information (There is no cost c

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_