The burden of oral disease among Wisconsin adults age 65 and older is significant. Many grew up without the protective benefits of water fluoridation or dental sealants, and now face new barriers to accessing dental care. Challenges like the loss of insurance, transportation issues, and limited mobility can leave seniors vulnerable to tooth loss, untreated decay, root fragments, and oral debris—all conditions that can cause pain and lower quality of life. Addressing this growing population’s needs will require system-wide changes.

**IMPACT OF TOOTH LOSS**
Tooth loss can affect the overall quality of life in the following ways:

- **self-esteem**
- **speaking**
- **sleeping**
- **eating**

**PREVENTION**
Tooth decay and gum disease are preventable but can cause tooth loss if left untreated.

**NATURAL TEETH LOSS**
1 in 3 nursing home residents are missing all natural teeth and of those, 25% do not have dentures.

**UNMET DENTAL NEEDS**
1 in 2 (50%) nursing home residents have unmet dental treatment needs.

**BACK TOOTH LOSS**
1 in 3 older adults in nursing homes do not have back teeth that function for eating.

**UNTREATED DECAY**
1 in 2 older adults in nursing homes have untreated tooth decay.
For more information about the Wisconsin Healthy Smiles Survey visit: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01121.pdf

1 in 4 older adults in nursing homes have moderate to severe gingival inflammation.

Poor oral health complicates diabetes and has been linked with other conditions such as heart disease, bacterial pneumonia, and stroke.

Nursing home residents face additional barriers to accessing dental care like cost, transportation, and mobility.

1 in 4 nursing home residents have moderate to severe gingival inflammation.

1 in 3 nursing home residents have teeth that have decayed or broken down to the gum line.

1 in 5 older adults in nursing homes need periodontal care.

1 in 4 nursing home residents have substantial oral debris.

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Wisconsin Healthy Smiles Survey

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Oral Health Program

Other Factors

Health Complications

Barriers to Care

Periodontal Care

Oral Debris

1 in 3 nursing home residents have teeth that have decayed or broken down to the gum line.

2 in 5 older adults in nursing homes need periodontal care.

1 in 4 nursing home residents have substantial oral debris.