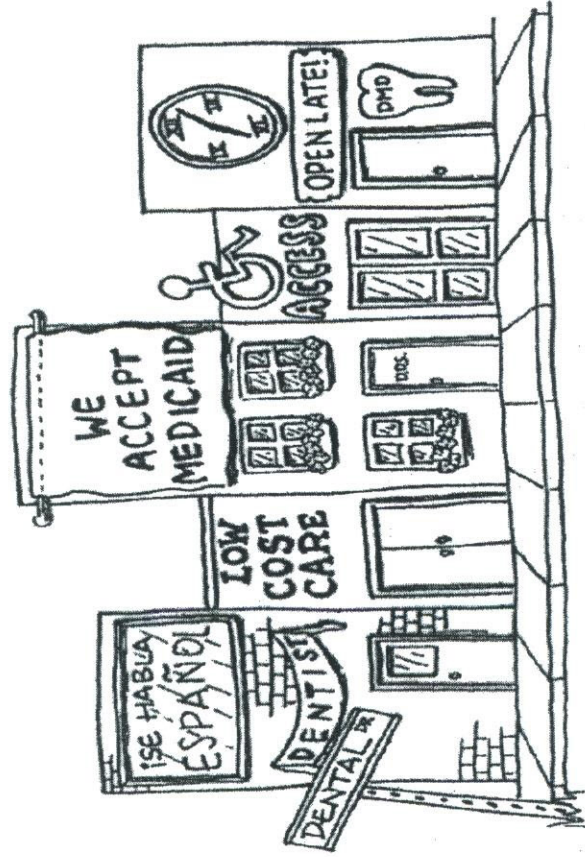


Cover Page

1. How do you choose a dentist?

When looking for a dentist there are important questions that you should ask. How convenient is it to get to the dentist's office, both for a regular visit and in an emergency, and what are the office hours? Is the facility handicapped accessible? Is the staff bi-or multi-lingual? What is the dentist's training and experience, especially in a procedure that you need? What practices or procedures does the dentist use to make your treatment comfortable? What form of payment does the dentist accept? You can also ask your primary care doctor for a referral.



2. What should I tell the dentist about my health?

It is important for the dentist to know as much as possible about your health for your safety as a patient. Tell the dentist about all health problems, operations, allergies or other intolerances, as well as all medications that you take – prescription, over the counter and home remedies. Bring a list of your medications with you, or put them in a bag and bring them, when you go to the dentist. It's a good idea for the dentist to contact your medical doctor so that they are all on the same page regarding your medical history and care.



3. What can I do to make my mouth healthy?

It is important to keep your mouth clean. This includes your teeth, gums, tongue, and dentures. Brush after meals and use floss, toothpicks, or special brushes to clean between your teeth. You should also brush your tongue to remove bacteria and to help keep your breath fresher. Brushing your teeth helps to remove plaque that causes cavities and can lead to gum disease. Use toothpaste that contains fluoride and has the ADA (American Dental Association) seal on the tube. It is good to have fluoride even if you are an adult. If using a mouthwash, choose one that contains little or no alcohol because alcohol can cause dry mouth or make dry mouth feel worse.



4. How do medications I take affect my oral health?

Many medications contribute to symptoms of dry mouth. Common medications that have this effect are those often used for depression and high blood pressure, but hundreds of medications can have this side effect. They can affect the amount of spit you make, your sense of taste, and how your gums and mouth feel. If your mouth is dry you are more at risk for getting cavities. Ask your doctor, dentist, or pharmacist about possible side effects of medications that you take. Some medical facilities also have computerized resources that allow patients to access information about their medications.



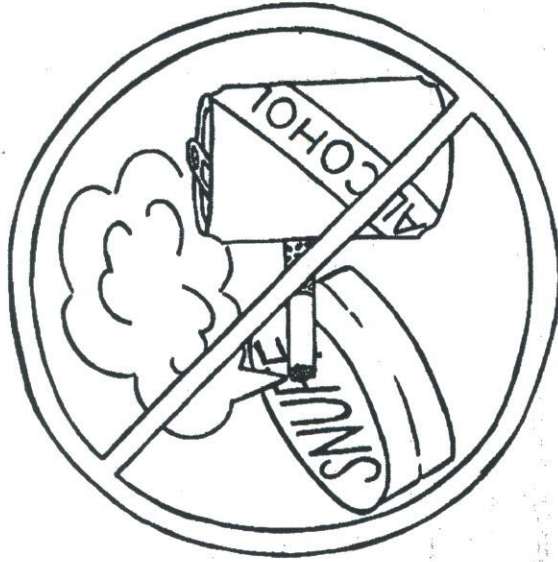
5. Am I at risk for oral cancer?

Risks for oral cancer include alcohol and tobacco use (smoking, snuff and chewing tobacco). A person's ethnic/cultural

background may also put them at risk. Oral cancer rates are significantly higher for males than for females. Oral cancer rates are higher for Hispanic and Black males than for White males.

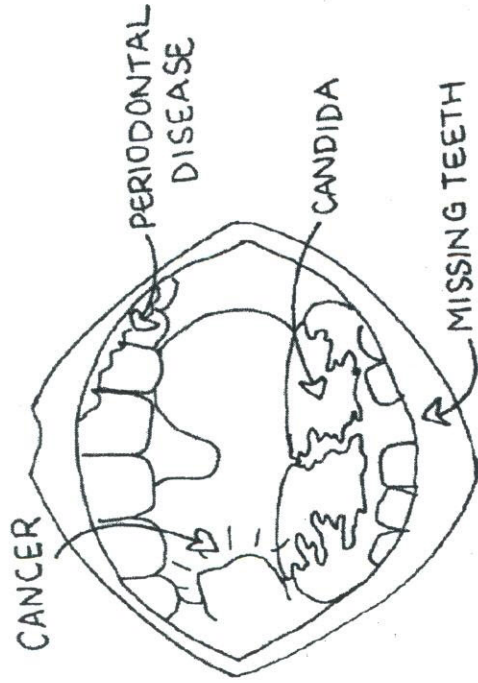
Oral cancer rates increase with age.

Dentures or partials that don't fit well can also cause sores that can become cancerous if not treated. In the first stages, oral cancer doesn't necessarily hurt but, may cause numbness or tingling. It is important that your dentist check for oral cancer and that you report any lumps, bumps or sores in your mouth or gums.



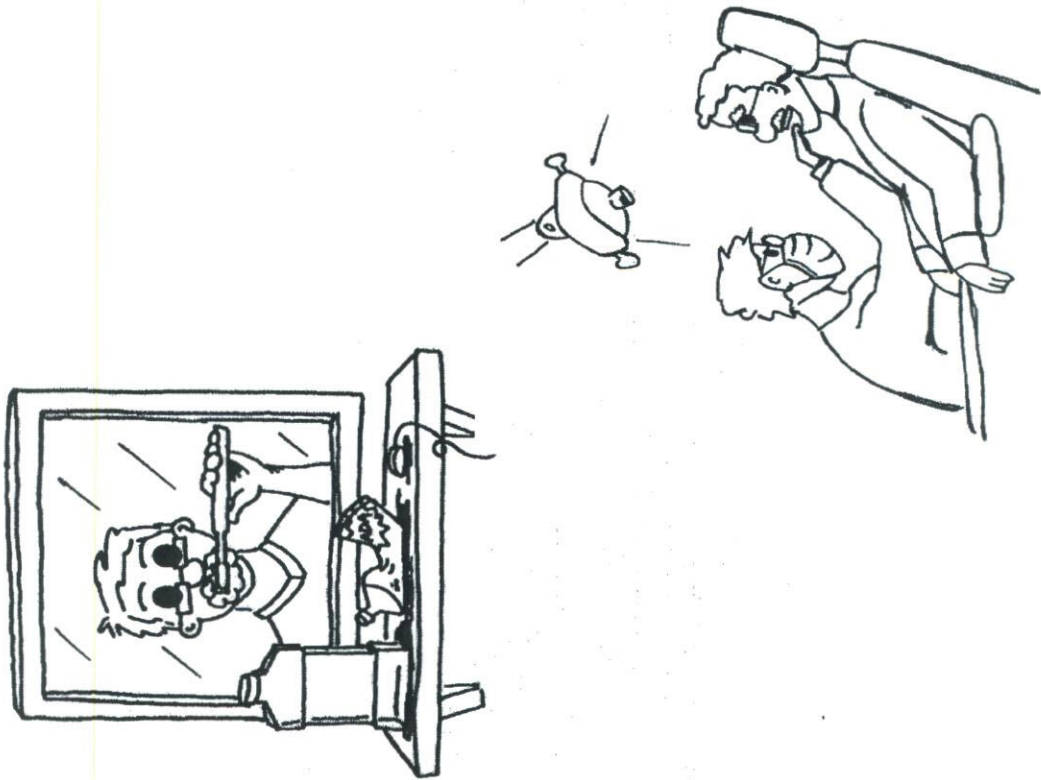
6. What types of oral diseases are there?

There are several common oral diseases. Tooth decay (cavities) is a frequent cause of tooth loss. Bacteria in your mouth form plaque, leading to acid formation and cavities. Foods containing carbohydrates (starches and sugars) may contribute to tooth decay. Gum disease (periodontitis) is also a frequent cause of tooth loss. The older you are the more likely you are to have bad gum disease. Men are more likely than women to have worse gum problems. Another type of oral disease, Oral cancer, is mostly diagnosed in older adults. Risks for this cancer include tobacco and alcohol use. Eating fruits and vegetables helps to prevent oral cancer.



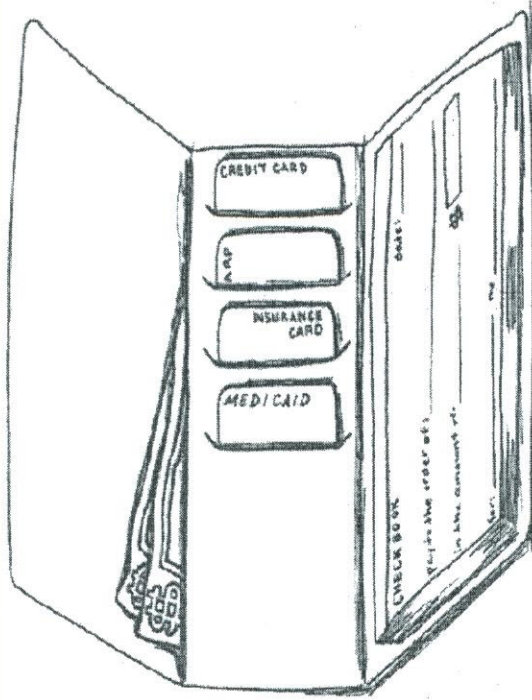
7. Can I prevent oral diseases?

Many oral diseases, such as cavities and gum disease, can be prevented with good oral health care. This includes brushing and cleaning between - your teeth and visiting a dentist at least once a year for a dental exam. It is also important to clean areas where there are gaps between teeth. People with dentures, or those with diabetes or that use inhalers, are more at risk for getting yeast infections (also known as candida or thrush). If that happens, your dentist will have to treat both your mouth and your dentures, if you have them.



8. How do I pay for care? (insurances, finances)

Medicare does not pay for dental care and Medicaid, in CT, only pays for some dental care. However, some policies can be purchased to help pay for dental care, such as through AARP. You have to be an informed consumer, however, to determine whether it is better to buy insurance or to save your money and pay out of pocket for your dental care. For people who have no insurance or very limited finances, some state and federal resources are available, and some dental clinics or practices offer sliding fee scales.



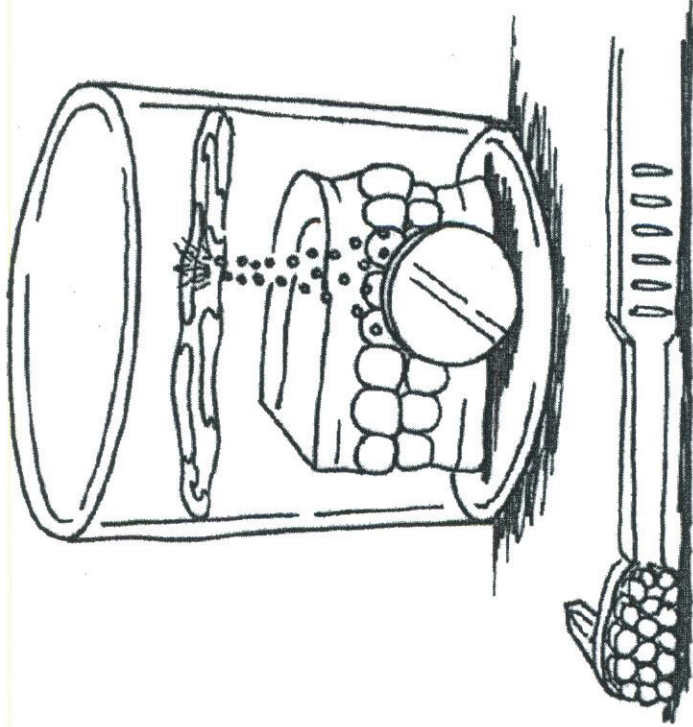
9. How does the dentist decide what I need? (dentist's role in patient care; different types of treatment)

The dentist evaluates each patient in order to provide the most appropriate care. What may seem like a quick decision to you as a patient is based on years of education and experience. If you have concerns about a treatment that the dentist recommends for you, it is your right and responsibility to ask questions about how that decision was made.



10. How to best care for dentures? (care for dentures)

To clean your dentures, use denture paste or tablets and a denture brush. When you take out your dentures, soak them in water. As a precaution, when cleaning your dentures it may be useful to put a towel in the sink and then fill the sink with a small amount of water in case your hands become slippery and your dentures fall into the sink. The towel will cushion the dentures so they are less likely to break. Dentures should not be kept in your mouth all night.



11. What should you ask when you go to the dentist?

You should ask your dentist the following questions: What are the side effects of things that he/she prescribes? What are the treatments and procedures that you are having done? What is cost for the treatment? How long will the appointment take? Will there be any discomfort during or after your treatment? How soon after your procedure can you eat or take medications? What should you do if there is bleeding later from the procedure? You should also ask the dentist to check for oral cancer.



12. How can a dentist offer pain management?

There are different ways to manage pain, depending on the patient. Sometimes fear and pain can interact together. Sometimes people who are fearful experience more pain than others. Dentists can manage pain or fear with medication you can take before your appointment, pain medication that is injected directly at the treatment site - "laughing gas" (also known as nitrous oxide) that is inhaled-, intravenous sedation or general anesthesia. Dentists may choose one local anesthesia over another because of how long the procedure will take or because of a medical condition. TLC and trust between the patient and dentist go a long way to overcome pain and fear.

