In the fall of 2014, the NSDA asked Nova Scotians about seniors’ oral health care: how important is oral health care in their long-term plans, and what do they know about the dental health of family members over the age of 65?

Polls show:
- 60% of Nova Scotians are not concerned with their parents’ (over the age of 65) oral health
- 98% of Nova Scotians rank their own oral health as critical or very important to themselves
- 27% of Nova Scotians don’t know how their parent (over the age of 65) feels about their own oral health

These statistics indicate a knowledge and awareness gap between caring for your own oral health and being concerned about a family member or loved one that may no longer be able to monitor or maintain their own dental health. Nova Scotia’s dentists are concerned with the oral health of our aging provincial population. This report is their call to action.

Questions Nova Scotians Should Be Asking...

Who is going to care for my oral health? Or assist me when I cannot?

Who will provide oral care for my aging parent or loved one when they cannot care for themselves?

What will happen to their teeth and gums when they suffer from reduced dexterity, or age-related dementia?


Polls show:
- 60% of Nova Scotians are not concerned with their parents’ (over the age of 65) oral health
- 98% of Nova Scotians rank their own oral health as critical or very important to themselves
- 27% of Nova Scotians don’t know how their parent (over the age of 65) feels about their own oral health

These statistics indicate a knowledge and awareness gap between caring for your own oral health and being concerned about a family member or loved one that may no longer be able to monitor or maintain their own dental health. Nova Scotia’s dentists are concerned with the oral health of our aging provincial population. This report is their call to action.

Who is going to care for my oral health? Or assist me when I cannot?

Who will provide oral care for my aging parent or loved one when they cannot care for themselves?

What will happen to their teeth and gums when they suffer from reduced dexterity, or age-related dementia?

In the fall of 2014, the NSDA asked Nova Scotians about seniors’ oral health care: how important is oral health care in their long-term plans, and what do they know about the dental health of family members over the age of 65?

Polls show:
- 60% of Nova Scotians are not concerned with their parents’ (over the age of 65) oral health
- 98% of Nova Scotians rank their own oral health as critical or very important to themselves
- 27% of Nova Scotians don’t know how their parent (over the age of 65) feels about their own oral health

These statistics indicate a knowledge and awareness gap between caring for your own oral health and being concerned about a family member or loved one that may no longer be able to monitor or maintain their own dental health. Nova Scotia’s dentists are concerned with the oral health of our aging provincial population. This report is their call to action.

Who is going to care for my oral health? Or assist me when I cannot?

Who will provide oral care for my aging parent or loved one when they cannot care for themselves?

What will happen to their teeth and gums when they suffer from reduced dexterity, or age-related dementia?

About The NSDA
Established in 1891, the Nova Scotia Dental Association represents the province’s dentists and advocates for the oral health of all Nova Scotians.

nsdental.org

The Brushing Up on Mouth Care Program
The Brushing Up on Mouth Care Program was created to examine the integration of oral health care for frail and dependent older adults into continuing care settings in rural Nova Scotia, Canada.

This collaboration of health care researchers and providers explored the broad spectrum of influences on daily mouth care in long-term care, to assist in establishing a formal process for integrating oral care into organizational policy and practice.

Training resources for caregivers and long-term care facilities are free and available online for download.
http://www.ahprc.dal.ca/projects/oral-care/

Healthyteeth.org Plus+
Healthyteeth is an award winning student and teacher oral health education and awareness site. Since its launch, Healthyteeth has received over 2 million site visits from all over the world.

In 2014, Healthyteeth was renovated to add new interactive features and elements, encourage questions from all over the world, AND the addition of a dedicated seniors site, Healthyteeth.org Plus+.

If you can’t find the answer to what you’re looking for, get in touch with a local dentist with just 1-click of a button.
healthyteeth.org

Nova Scotia seniors face a looming oral health care crisis. Nova Scotia already has one of the oldest populations in Canada, with the impending retirement of many more in the “baby boomer” generation. For those of us who aren’t yet seniors, we likely have family members who are.

Have we considered the oral health of our seniors?

Approximately one-third of Canadians over the age of 80 live in some form of long-term care. Although mouth care is an integral part of daily personal care for the independent, it is often inadequate for those who depend on others. Oral health and oral hygiene status amongst dependent older adults is frequently poor. For some, because it has been given low priority in long-term care, and for those who are independent, there can be issues with dentistry, mobility and resources to fund care. This places our senior population at risk for oral diseases and dysfunction, which greatly impact quality of life.

Aging teeth are at increased risk for gum disease, root caries (decay which often leads to tooth loss), soft-tissue lesions and significant tooth wear. A host of problems can be linked to gum disease, including respiratory issues, heart disease and diabetes. Seniors are also more susceptible to problems with dry mouth and ill-fitting dentures.

Broken or damaged teeth, abrasions, gum disease and other oral problems can lead to an inability to eat, swallow, or speak. These symptoms often go overlooked, and without proper access to care, pose a great danger.

Here is the unfortunate truth about the imminent future. For those who care for aging parents, or are exposed to gerontology through health care work, many can tell you that decades of carefully looking after their oral health are frequently abandoned.

When seniors enter into long-term or an assisted living facility (LTC), dental health records are often absent. No resources to fund care. This places our senior population at risk for oral diseases and dysfunction, which greatly impact quality of life.

For those with family in long term care, consider a discussion with administration that includes:

1. Implementing an oral health screening on admission;
2. Requiring an annual oral exam by a dentist;
3. Developing a daily mouth care plan and suitable infrastructure to support the appropriate and timely delivery of dental care.

Facts About Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia has a disproportionate population of aging adults.1

Worldwide, the number of seniors reaching the age of 80 by 2050 is expected to quadruple to over 400 million. Canada is home to almost 5 million seniors over the age of 65, and that number is expected to surpass the number of children by 2016. Due to the aging baby boomers, and low fertility rates, this will be the first time seniors outnumber children in Canadian history.

Our aging population differs from similar seniors of the past – they have kept more of their natural teeth.2 Today’s seniors and the seniors of tomorrow will have the expectation of keeping their natural teeth longer than ever before. The baby boomer generation is now entering its senior years with more natural teeth than previous generations. These natural teeth require regular care.

There is a misconception that what you cannot see cannot hurt you. We need more awareness on the particular oral health needs of our senior population. What are the problem signs? How can we prevent the specific oral issues facing seniors?

For those who care for aging parents, or are exposed to gerontology through health care work, many can tell you that decades of carefully looking after their oral health are frequently abandoned.

When seniors enter into long-term or an assisted living facility (LTC), dental health records are often absent. No

...continued

Resources and statistics provided by:
2. The oral health of aging baby boomers: a comparison of adults aged 45–64 and those 65 years and older, Mary S. McMillan, Delia C. Matthews, Jilanne B. Clovis, Martha Brillant and Mark J. Filiaggi
3. Canadian Dental Association, CDA, National Oral Health Action Plan
4. Matthews, Joanne B. Clovis, Martha Brillant and Mark J. Filiaggi
5. NSDA Membership Survey, Seniors Access to Care Survey
6. Do it yourself. Don’t be afraid to ask for help or refer others who cannot grasp the small handles of a regular toothbrush.
8. Healthyteeth.org
9. Nova Scotia already has one of the oldest populations in Canada, with the impending retirement of many more in the “baby boomer” generation. For those of us who aren’t yet seniors, we likely have family members who are.
10. A similar program could lead to meaningful reduction in health care costs right here in Nova Scotia.

Did You Know?

Some examples include:

1. Toothbrushes: Specialty grips can be custom made to meet the needs of individuals.
2. Tennis Ball: These are easy to find and provide a better grip for those who did not have good manual control.
3. Rubber Bike Handle: Long handled toothbrushes are also available to assist those who do not have full motion with their arms.

HelpfulHints

2. The oral health of aging baby boomers: a comparison of adults aged 45–64 and those 65 years and older, Mary S. McMillan, Delia C. Matthews, Jilanne B. Clovis, Martha Brillant and Mark J. Filiaggi
3. Canadian Dental Association, CDA, National Oral Health Action Plan
4. Matthews, Joanne B. Clovis, Martha Brillant and Mark J. Filiaggi
5. NSDA Membership Survey, Seniors Access to Care Survey
6. Do it yourself. Don’t be afraid to ask for help or refer others who cannot grasp the small handles of a regular toothbrush.
8. Healthyteeth.org