

Senior oral health care

By Dr. ALLAN J. MILEWSKI, D.D.S.

Recently, I received an invitation to join the AARP (American Association of Retired People). While far from the age of retiring, I have joined that distinguished club of Americans who have been around for half a century. As I get older, I find myself having to pay attention to my health in new ways. The same is true for dental health ... as we age, we face unique challenges in maintaining a healthy smile.

Many senior citizens find themselves taking many different medications. Often, prescription medications can have a side effect of reducing saliva in the mouth. This decrease in saliva can make it harder to eat, swallow and speak. Dry mouth can even lead to decay. Your dentist can help you with dry mouth, prescribing special mouth rinses and toothpastes that can increase saliva flow. Avoiding alcohol, sweets, caffeine, tobacco and drinking plenty of water also can help.

Arthritis affects many senior citizens, making brushing and flossing dif-



MILEWSKI

ficult and often painful. Many of my patients with arthritis have been successful in using battery operated toothbrushes. These toothbrushes have large handles and reduce arthritis pain by doing the brushing work for you. Special tools also are available to help you floss.

Seeing your dentist at least twice a year is very important as you age.

Remember, brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, and a healthy diet are habits to have your entire lifetime. And always remember to provide your dentist with your most current list of medications.

Some of my favorite patients are senior citizens. They impart their wisdom to me and I, in return, am committed to helping them maintain a healthy smile. They've earned it.

For more information on senior dental health care, contact Dr. Milewski at 330-725-2242 or visit us on the Web at www.medinamamilydentistry.com. Dr. Milewski is a general dentist practicing in Medina.