



# Osteoarthritis Oral Care

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## Keeping a Healthy Smile With Osteoarthritis

Since osteoarthritis is also known as a “degenerative disk disease,” you can expect to experience some involvement in your facial joints as well. In other words, temporomandibular joint disorders (TMJ) are much more frequent for people that live with this medical condition. Oral fungal infections and heavy bleeding are also normal, due to the corticosteroids and NSAIDs taken to manage the condition. Oral hygiene and routine dental check-ups are extremely important to prevent the oral health risks often associated with osteoarthritis. Let’s take a look at osteoarthritis oral care.

Managing TMJ disorders is best left to non-invasive methods. Surgical joint replacements often leave as many as half of patients without any improvement in their TMJ disorder. It should be left as a last resort with non-invasive techniques used first. Applying warm and cool compresses and avoiding chewing hard food or gum is a must.

## Continue to Visit Your Dentist

**Limited mobility often causes people with osteoarthritis to avoid dental visits.** Being unable to open your jaw very well can impact your diet, overall health, and whether or not you even schedule appointments with your dentist. Scheduling a slightly longer appointment can allow you to take frequent breaks as needed. If a small pillow or prop will help you, ask for one, or feel free to bring your own.

Ask your dental care provider not to adjust your backrest very far and explain your physical comfort levels to them so that they can make the procedure as simple as possible. Most dental teams do not mind accommodating patients who truly require alterations to positioning during their appointments but just know that we have many people request this on a normal basis (simply because they don’t like lying back very far) and it can make it physically demanding on the dental team. If you give your dental provider a logical reason, they’ll be more likely to accommodate you!

## Improving Your Daily Osteoarthritis Oral Care Routine

People that live with osteoarthritis are much more likely to require dental extractions than people who do not have it. Part of the reason for this is that physical limitations prevent good oral hygiene and therefore gum disease becomes more prevalent. A large-handled electric toothbrush can improve your daily oral hygiene routine. Putting dental care off due to discomfort in the dental chair will cause what is a small filling today to become a tooth that needs a root canal tomorrow. The only way to prevent becoming one of the tooth-loss statistics is to get your dental care completed as early as possible and have your dentist screen for conditions at least twice each year.

## Have You Had a Joint Replacement?

In the circumstances in which osteoarthritis has caused you to have a joint replaced, be sure that you inform your dentist of this. Depending on when the time was of your joint replacement, you may need to have antibiotic

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prophylaxis (pre-med) before any type of dental appointment. Although this is simply cautionary, it is to prevent oral bacteria from entering the bloodstream during your treatment.