



## AGING TODAY

# Chew on This



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

**Isn't it so frustrating when you have to replace something you already own?** A new tire, a dishwasher, your HVAC unit? In your mind, that tidy little sum you were sitting on was on the way to becoming a new (fill in the blank). In my home, it's always about the fabulous outdoor furniture Susie is eying.

Imagine, if what you are replacing, is a perfectly good (or so you thought) tooth. Say it's a molar that has been filled so many times, you need a crown. Or, it's a crown with decay under it and now you need to extract that tooth and buy yourself a new one.

This is the exact scenario that played out for my wife, Susie. At first, she was a bit down in the mouth (pun intended) at the thought of the expense of getting a dental implant. In reality, the dental implant surgery which took place right around her birthday was truly the best gift she could have received.

Beyond flashing that winning smile, our oral health affects our ability to speak, eat, and show emotions. That sounds like a birthday present and party all in one. How well we care for our teeth can have a profound effect on our well-being, especially as we age.

Oral health problems in older adults include untreated tooth decay, tooth loss, and gum disease leading to periodontal disease. Periodontal diseases are inflammation and infections of the gums and bone that surround and support the teeth. In its early stage, called gingivitis, the gums can become swollen and red, and they may bleed. In its more serious form, called periodontitis, the gums can pull away from the tooth, bone can be lost, and the teeth may loosen or even fall out.

- 47.2% of adults aged 30 years and older have some form of periodontal disease

- Periodontal disease increases with age, 70.1% of adults 65 years and older have periodontal disease

There are many warning signs of periodontal disease:

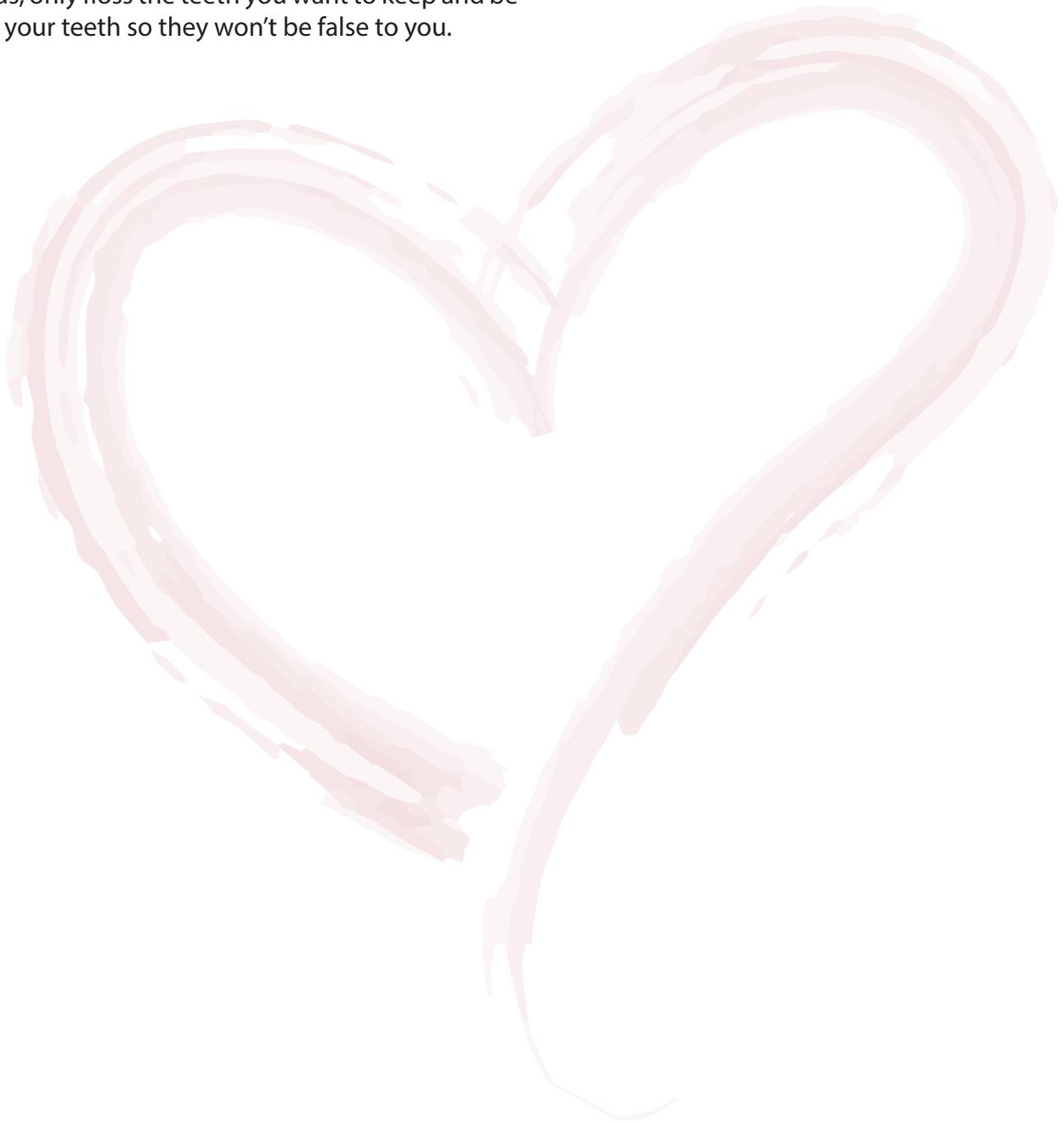
- Bad breath or bad taste that won't go away
- Red or swollen gums
- Tender or bleeding gums
- Painful chewing
- Loose teeth
- Sensitive teeth
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth
- Any change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Any change in the fit of partial dentures

Poor dental health can be the result or exacerbate chronic health conditions. Conditions such as diabetes, stroke, oral cancers, respiratory diseases, and osteoporosis, have a cause and effect inter-relationship to periodontal disease. In other words, oral and dental health is of paramount importance to overall health. Think of the importance of oral health as we sing along, "neck bone is connected to the jawbone."

Getting regular dental exams, brushing, and flossing is key. We put our choppers through lots of wear and tear in a lifetime and if you want to keep them, you need to show them love. Don't skip these basic operating instructions that you always nagged your kids about when they were young.

If you can't afford dental care, contact your state dental organization. They may be able to refer you to dentists in your area who provide care at a reduced rate. For Arizona, go to [www.azda.org](http://www.azda.org) and go to the header: For the Public. The last option in the drop down is Community Dental Clinic List. In addition, most dental schools have a clinic staffed by the professors and students, where care is provided based on your ability to pay.

Are you in the driver's seat or will you wind up taking residence in the dental chair? Take charge of your oral and dental health. I empower you to take control of your chewing, smiling, and speaking destiny with good habits and regular professional cleaning. In other words, only floss the teeth you want to keep and be true to your teeth so they won't be false to you.



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