

## Oral Wellness Newsletter



### Caring for your loved one after a stroke

If you are the caregiver, family member or friend of a stroke survivor, your role is vital. For stroke survivors, diet and exercise are important parts of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and prioritizing oral health can also help promote whole-body health. With a committed health care team and rehabilitation plan, most stroke survivors can prevent another stroke and thrive. Here are a few tips to help you care for your loved one:

1. **Help them establish a healthy routine.** Survivors are at high risk of having another stroke. Make sure your loved one eats a nutritious diet, maintains good oral hygiene, exercises, takes medications as prescribed and continues to see their primary care physician, dentist and optometrist annually to maintain their health.
2. **Modify their oral health routine.** After experiencing a stroke, survivors may experience dexterity problems that can prevent them from properly caring for their teeth and gums. Caregivers can help them brush, rinse, floss or even use a flossing alternative, such as a pre-threaded flosser, interdental brush or dental pick.
3. **Monitor their physical well-being.** Caregivers should consider assistance from a physical or occupational therapist if their loved one has dizziness; imbalance that results in falls; difficulty walking or moving around daily; or the inability to participate in or complete daily activities.
4. **Don't ignore falls.** Falls after stroke are common. If a fall is serious and results in severe pain, bruising or bleeding, take your loved one to the emergency room. Take note

if your loved one has two or more minor falls within a six-month period and schedule an appointment with their physician or physical therapist for treatment.

5. **Learn the ins and outs of their insurance coverage.** Consult with your loved one's health care provider or insurance company to find out how long insurance will cover medical and rehabilitation services and to determine out-of-pocket expenses. This can vary substantially from one case to another.

6. **Seek support.** Community resources, such as stroke survivor and caregiver support groups, are available for you and your loved one.

We also encourage you to check out our [Smile for Health® –Wellness](#) program – which offers enhanced dental insurance coverage for eligible stroke survivors who may be more susceptible to dental problems due to physical challenges that can make it harder to keep up with oral hygiene routines.



## May is Healthy Vision Month

This Healthy Vision month, learn why making your eyes a priority can help keep you aware of potential issues and preserve the health of your sight. Your eye doctor can give you a yearly, comprehensive eye exam to check for common eye problems. During the exam, you can choose to have your retina checked through dilation or digital imaging. Having a full view of the retina allows your doctor to look for vision impairments and determine if you are in the early stages of any eye-related diseases or need glasses or contacts.

Keeping a careful watch on your eyes may also benefit your overall health. People with vision problems are more likely than those with good vision to have diabetes, poor hearing, heart problems, high blood pressure, lower back pain and strokes, as well as have increased risk for falls, injury and depression<sup>1</sup>. Your sight is not something to be ignored. If minor issues aren't addressed early, they can lead to major issues in the future. Visit an eye doctor as soon as possible if you experience vision loss, eye pain, drainage or redness of the eye, double vision, floaters, halos or see flashes of light.

Don't take your eyesight for granted. Monitor the health of your vision by scheduling a yearly eye exam for you and your family.

You can also view this [flyer](#) to learn about the nine ways you can help protect your vision.

### Source:

1. *Healthy Vision Month; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2022. Retrieved April 2023.*



## Demystifying the Root Canal

Many people still have a fear of the dentist and the procedures they perform, but root canals are a simple and straightforward treatment designed to help you keep your natural teeth and preserve good dental health. In recognition of Root Canal Awareness Day on May 10, 2023, learn more about this important procedure that saves millions of teeth each year<sup>1</sup>.

### **What is a root canal?**

A root canal is a dental procedure performed by an endodontist specialist or general dentist to repair an infected or damaged tooth. They're recommended for treating teeth damaged by cavities, trauma from previous procedures or an abscess. Once the procedure is complete, the tooth is covered with a crown, which seamlessly blends with surrounding teeth and continues to function like all the others.

### **Why are root canals necessary?**

Root canals are a simple procedure that are recommended to save damaged, natural teeth and prevent the need for dental bridges and implants. Root canals are necessary when the pulp or soft tissue inside the tooth becomes inflamed or infected, which could lead to an abscess.

### **There are several reasons why a root canal may be necessary:**

- Trauma to the tooth from an accident
- Faulty crown
- Large fillings
- Deep decay
- Cracked or chipped tooth
- Repeated dental procedures on the same tooth

### **Advantages of a root canal:**

Understanding the benefits of a root canal procedure will help you make the right decision when considering your options. Here are some benefits:

- Alleviated pain from infection and inflammation
- Simple procedure
- Quick 30–60-minute visit

- Little to no pain during process

Login to your [MyDentalBenefits](#) and use the cost estimator to see what coverage you have for root canals.

**Source:**

1. *Root Canal Explained*; American Association of Endodontists, 2023. Retrieved April 2023.



## Virtual dental visits for urgent care

Dental emergencies can happen when you least expect it – during the holidays or even on the weekend. If you have urgent oral health concerns, please reach out to your dentist to discuss symptoms, severity and treatment options. If your dentist is not available to treat you for an urgent dental problem, you may have the option to access Teledentix virtual dental care from the comfort of your home, thanks to our partnership with Virtual Dental Care.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about these virtual services.

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