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How is your oral health tracking?

This year **Dental Health Week** (5-11 August) encourages Australians to make everyone aware of the key things they need to do to keep their teeth and gums healthy.

Dr Elaine Mawdsley, Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service's (SCHHS) Director of Oral Health, said that only half of Australians brush their teeth twice a day and 65% of Australians haven't seen a dentist in the last two years.

"Maintaining oral health is something we need to do properly each day. The reality is that a quick, occasional dash along your teeth won't suffice. Brushing for at least two minutes twice a day, cleaning in-between teeth with floss or an interdental brush and regularly visiting the dentist for check-ups are key" she said.

"We also must consider how our oral health may change with age. One of the biggest myths is losing teeth is a normal part of getting older. This is not true, your teeth should last you a lifetime. Keeping on track with your oral health is important to ensure this happens.

"As we age our risk of gum disease increases and some more serious concerns such as oral cancer also increase.

"Another issue frequently experienced by older people is dry mouth. It can be related to medications and certain medical conditions. Saliva carries important immune cells which help protect teeth from cavities and infections. It is important to drink plenty of water and have a chat with your dentist to see what they recommend to manage dry mouth.

Dr Mawdsley said: "Sadly we are seeing increasing numbers of older patients through Oncology. Those who have had chemotherapy or radiation in the 'head and neck' region have a significant oral health risk.

"At any age, regular dental check-ups can help you to catch any potential dental problems at their earliest stages. If you delay treatment, you may end up with permanent damage. If you look after your oral health, you're looking after the rest of your body and setting yourself up for longer lasting and far better overall health," she said.

Dr Mawdsley said SCHHS provided access to free oral health services to eligible people of all ages in the Sunshine Coast and Gympie regions.

To check if you or your child are eligible for free oral health services please visit the SCHHS Oral Health website at https://www.health.qld.gov.au/sunshinecoast/html/services/oral-home or make an enquiry by contacting the SCHHS Oral Health Call Centre on 1300 300 850.

Queensland Government

Ineligible residents should contact a private dental practice to arrange dental care.

ENDS

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