

Senior Statistics

Nationally and locally, the proportion of seniors in our population is growing.

- By 2030, seniors will represent nearly 20% of Washington's population; currently seniors represent about 12%. (OFM, 2003)
- More than 27% of Washington's seniors live in King County. 36% live in other urban counties. In senior-dense counties: Clallam, Garfield, Jefferson, Lincoln, Pacific, San Juan, and Wahkiakum seniors already make up over 20% of the population. (OFM, 2003)

Due to advances in oral health care, more seniors are aging with their natural teeth. However, this puts more seniors at risk for oral disease.

- In Washington, 84% of seniors 65+ have at least some of their natural teeth. (BRFSS, 2004). The nationwide this rate is 75% for seniors 60 + (MMWR, 2005).
- Nationwide, nearly 1 in 3 seniors over age 60 have root caries - restored and untreated. 13% have untreated root caries (MMWR, 2005).
- Nationwide, 19% of seniors over age 60 have untreated cavities. (MMWR, 2005)
- Nationwide, nearly ¼ of 65 to 74 year olds have severe periodontal disease. This jumps to 38% among low-income seniors. (Surgeon General, 2000)

Access to dental care is a significant problem for low-income seniors.

- More than 75% of Washington's seniors do not have dental coverage. (WDS Market Research Group, 2003)
- Of low-income seniors with Medicaid insurance, only 20% received a dental visit in 2004. (MAA, 2004)
- Compared to younger adults, seniors are more likely to have not had a recent dental visit. 16% of Washington seniors have not been to a dentist in the past 5 years. (BRFSS, 2001)

Dry mouth is a very common experience among seniors.

- 80% of Americans take at least 1 medication each week and 25% take at least 5. These numbers are even higher for seniors. (JADA, 2004)
- Approximately 30% of all prescribed medications are for seniors. (Surgeon General, 2000)
- 75-94% of patients taking medications are taking at least one drug that has risk of oral side effects, the most common of which is dry mouth.
- More than 400 medications (OTC and prescription) cause dry mouth. These medications include antidepressants (tricyclics), antihistamines, antipsychotics, antiparkinsonian, and antihypertensives. (Surgeon General, 2000)