

# ORAL HEALTH & AGING



INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS



## FINDING LOW-COST DENTAL CARE

As someone who cares for an older adult, you know the importance of brushing and flossing for maintaining oral health. In addition to having a good oral hygiene routine, the person you help should see a dentist for regular check-ups and any necessary dental treatment. If he or she cannot afford to visit the dentist, take a look at the list of resources below for suggestions on where to find free or reduced-cost dental care.

### DENTAL SCHOOLS

Dental schools can be a good source of quality, reduced-cost dental treatment. Most of these teaching facilities have clinics that allow dental students to gain experience treating patients while providing care at a reduced cost. Experienced, licensed dentists closely supervise the students.

For a complete list of **dental schools**, visit the American Dental Association website at <https://coda.ada.org/find-a-program>.

### DENTAL HYGIENE SCHOOLS

Dental hygiene schools may also offer supervised, low-cost preventive dental care as part of the training experience for dental hygienists.

To locate **dental hygiene schools**, go to the American Dental Hygienists' Association website at [www.adha.org/dental-hygiene-programs](http://www.adha.org/dental-hygiene-programs).

### COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Health centers supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration provide health care to patients even if they can't pay. There are nearly 1,400 health centers around the country. About three-quarters of the centers also provide dental care.

To find a health center in your area, visit <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov>.



## STATE AND LOCAL RESOURCES

Your **state or local agency on aging or health department** may know of programs in your area that offer free or reduced-cost dental care. Your local agency on aging may also provide transportation to dental care. Call your local or state agency on aging to learn more about their transportation programs.

Your **State Health Insurance Assistance Program** (sometimes called a counseling advocacy or counseling assistance program) offers one-on-one counseling by paid professionals and trained volunteers to help consumers understand their Medicare benefits. They can also help with billing problems, and address issues related to supplemental insurance and long-term care insurance options.

The **Eldercare Locator**, a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging, will connect you to services for older adults and their families. Visit <https://eldercare.acl.gov> or call 1-800-677-1116.

## MEDICARE & MEDICAID

**Medicare** is a federal health insurance program for people 65 and older and for people under 65 with certain disabilities. Medicare only covers dental services related to specific medical conditions or treatments. It does not cover dentures or most routine care like check-ups, cleanings, or fillings. Visit Medicare Dental Services ([www.medicare.gov/coverage/dental-services](http://www.medicare.gov/coverage/dental-services)) or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

**Medicaid** is a state-run program that provides medical benefits – and in some cases dental benefits – to eligible individuals and families. Most states provide limited dental services for adults, while some offer comprehensive services. Visit Medicaid & You ([www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-and-you/index.html](http://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-and-you/index.html)).



## MORE RESOURCES:

### RURAL HEALTH INFORMATION HUB

To find rural health resources and organizations, contact the **Rural Health Information Hub** at –

Website: [www.ruralhealthinfo.org](http://www.ruralhealthinfo.org)

Email: [info@ruralhealthinfo.org](mailto:info@ruralhealthinfo.org)

Phone: 1-800-270-1898

### VETERANS AFFAIRS DENTAL HOME PAGE

For qualifying veterans, the **Department of Veterans Affairs** offers comprehensive dental care benefits. Visit the VA Dentistry webpage at [www.va.gov/dental](http://www.va.gov/dental) or call 1-800-827-1000.

### UNITED WAY

The **United Way** may be able to direct you to free or reduced-cost dental services in your community. Visit the United Way at [www.unitedway.org](http://www.unitedway.org) or call 2-1-1.

### DENTAL LIFELINE NETWORK

**Dental Lifeline Network** is a national nonprofit organization that provides access to dental care and education for people who cannot afford it *and*:

- have a permanent disability or
- who are elderly: age 65 or older or
- who are medically fragile

Visit [www.dentallifeline.org](http://www.dentallifeline.org) and click on State Programs for information on how to apply or to find out if you qualify for free dental care.

## What about clinical trials (research studies)?

Dental researchers sometimes seek volunteers with specific dental, oral, or craniofacial conditions to participate in research studies, also called **clinical trials**.

It's important to know that –

- clinical trials typically do not focus on routine dental care such as filling cavities, fixing broken teeth, treating gum disease, or being fitted for dentures.
- a clinical trial may not cover all the costs associated with participating. Be sure to ask which costs are covered if you are considering a clinical trial.

To search for clinical trials, visit [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov). ClinicalTrials.gov is a registry and results database of federally and privately funded clinical trials conducted in the United States and around the world.

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