



THE KEYS TO ORAL HEALTH

Getting to good oral health is like going through a series of locked doors. Without the right keys, most people can't get there — no matter how hard they try. The health of the mouth also impacts other aspects of overall health, and too often in Tennessee, income-constrained older adults are locked out of both. SMILE ON 65+ knows that a healthy mouth unlocks a vibrant life.



AWARENESS

SMILE ON 65+ seeks out older Tennesseans and helps them understand the benefits of better oral health.

For those who aren't able to see a dentist regularly — which includes many income-constrained older Tennesseans — the connection between oral health and overall health may not be obvious. Raising awareness opens the door for conversations with those who are dentally uninsured and have unmet oral health needs.



AFFORDABILITY

SMILE ON 65+ patients receive the oral care they need, such as cleanings, extractions, and dentures, all for a small fee.

Oral health for older adults in Tennessee is among the worst in the nation, but for those who can't afford to visit a private practice or pay for dental insurance, there is no adult dental Medicaid program, no dental benefit in Medicare, and few dental providers who accept Medicare Advantage plans. This vacuum of affordable care for older Tennesseans leaves many of them with untreated dental disease.



ACCESSIBILITY

SMILE ON 65+ provider partners have a presence in all regions of the state, and Community Dental Health Coordinators case manage patients to help them overcome barriers to getting the care they need.

Prior to SMILE ON 65+ establishing partnerships with 30 nonprofit clinic locations across the state, oral healthcare was inaccessible to many older Tennesseans who were not aware of where to seek care, or how to find and pay for transportation.

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PATIENT SUCCESS STORIES



Nine years ago, after having three heart valves replaced, **Eddie** began bleeding from his mouth, waking up in the morning with blood on his pillow and sheets. Following the advice of his cardiologist, Eddie had all his teeth pulled and planned to get dentures. On his return visit to the dentist, however, he was informed that the dentures would require an up front payment of \$3,500. Living on disability payments of only \$600 per month, this was far

out of reach for Eddie. He left embarrassed and without the dentures he needed. Eddie went eight years without teeth; his face sunk in and people told him he looked sick. He grew a beard to try to fill in his face. Then a relative told him about SMILE ON 65+. After getting dentures, Eddie shaved his beard and says he'll never grow it back again. His face has filled back out and now that he can eat regular food again, his nutrition has improved, along with his overall health.

Prior to SMILE ON 65+, **Robert** had several missing teeth. He also had several cavities and some teeth were severely broken off, as far down as the gumline. He regularly experienced acid reflux from his inability to chew his food. Since getting his dentures, Robert's acid reflux has improved, along with his overall quality of life. He feels comfortable smiling again, and no longer covers his mouth when he talks or laughs like he used to. This has made him more

social. Before, his daily life involved work and home. Now, he enjoys venturing out in public and has become more involved at church. This has given him a better outlook on life and he has become more positive about the future. He has even referred several others to SMILE ON 65+ so that they can experience the positive benefits of good oral health.



Simone had numerous health issues that led to the decline of her oral health. For more than 10 years, she covered her mouth whenever she could, embarrassed by tooth decay; she even began hiding inside her home to avoid being seen. Thanks to a referral to a SMILE ON 65+ provider, Simone got the extractions and full set of dentures that she desperately needed. She recently reconnected with family and allowed herself

to be photographed for the first time in years. "Just to smile again is such a blessing," she said.