



## THE FACTS

### Healthy gums and teeth are not a luxury:

- > Seniors with dental decay are much more likely to develop pneumonia, the #1 cause of mortality in long-term care.
- > Seniors with gum disease are 4 times more likely to develop rheumatoid arthritis.
- > Gum disease is linked with up to a 90% increase in risk for heart disease.
- > Dental visits are an effective method of screening for treatable cancers of the mouth.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

JOIN US IN ASKING BRITISH COLUMBIA TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM OF PUBLICALLY FUNDED ORAL HYGIENE AND DENTAL CARE FOR LOW-INCOME SENIORS.

1

*Sign the petition.*  
Return it to the Richmond Women's Resource Centre.

2

*Write a letter or call*  
your federal, provincial or municipal elected official.

3

*Talk to people*  
in your community about why senior's oral health matters.



#### ACCESS TO DENTAL AND ORAL HEALTH CARE AS WE AGE BENEFITS ALL OF US.

If you are lucky, you will grow old. Seniors oral health care is not just important for seniors, it is important for all British Columbians.

#### IT GETS HARDER TO CARE FOR OUR TEETH AS WE AGE.

Disabilities such as arthritis can make it difficult to care for your own teeth. Conditions such as dementia can compromise your ability to remember to care for your teeth.

#### BC NEEDS A PROGRAM OF PUBLICALLY FUNDED ORAL HYGIENE AND DENTAL CARE FOR LOW-INCOME SENIORS.

BC is worst place in Canada for accessing affordable dental care for seniors.

Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan all have dental care programs for low-income adults. Alberta and Newfoundland have programs for low-income seniors. All three territories fund oral care for all senior residents. In BC seniors have very few options.

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I worry about my dental care more than ever. I often get painfully swollen gums. I cannot afford to see a dentist. All I do is endure the pain.

JULIE, AGE 70





“My teeth are decaying and have been hurting for a few months now. I can’t eat or sleep. As a last resort, I had to ask my children to pay. I feel like I am a burden to my family.”

— SHUFANG, AGE 80

### THE MAJORITY OF CANADIAN SENIORS CANNOT AFFORD DENTAL CARE.

Over 27% of seniors avoid dental care due to cost.

Fifty-seven per cent seek treatment only in an emergency.

Sixty-three per cent of seniors have not had a dental visit in the last year.

### SENIORS WHO CANNOT ACCESS DENTAL AND ORAL HEALTH CARE SUFFER GREATLY.

1. They endure unnecessary, chronic mouth pain
2. They suffer from lack of sleep and nutrition
3. They lose teeth that could be saved through preventative treatment
4. They suffer social isolation due to shame about their teeth.



“My husband has sore teeth so I have to blend all food for him so he can eat.”

— ZHOUGWEN, AGE 78

### FOR COPIES OF THE PETITION

Please call 604-822-0633  
Canadian Centre for Elder Law

### PLEASE RETURN SIGNED PETITIONS TO THE RICHMOND WOMEN’S RESOURCE CENTRE AT:

110—700 Minoru Blvd  
Richmond, BC V6Y 3Z5

### FIND OUT MORE

This publication is part of the Older Women’s Dialogue Project, a collaboration of the Canadian Centre for Elder Law and the West Coast Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund.  
More on the project can be found at [www.bcli.org/ccel](http://www.bcli.org/ccel)



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# SENIORS *Deserve* TO SMILE



THE RIGHT TO DENTAL CARE