

# Tooth Survival in Older Adults with Complex Health Issues

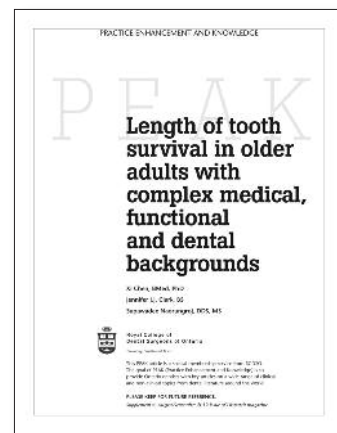
PEAK (Practice Enhancement and Knowledge) is a College service for members. The goal is to regularly provide Ontario dentists with copies of key articles on a wide range of clinical and non-clinical topics from the dental literature around the world.

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Tooth loss is a serious public oral health concern among older adults and, sadly, it is still relatively common. In addition to compromising oral function, tooth loss may affect nutritional status and impair systemic health, contribute to physical and mental deterioration, and lead to social embarrassment. It is important to take appropriate measures to prevent tooth loss in older adults, as well as its effects on their systemic health and quality of life.

Tooth loss is usually associated with caries progression, periodontal breakdown and/or fracture. This outcome can be considered a failure of oral health care strategies that were used to manage the patient. From a clinical perspective, if a patient is considered to be at an



increased risk of tooth loss, it is essential for the dentist to assess how soon this outcome is likely to occur, so that the treatment plan can be altered and preventive care strategies can be enhanced to avoid it.

With the current issue of Dispatch, PEAK is pleased to offer members the following article on this important subject: “Length of tooth survival in older adults with complex medical, functional and dental backgrounds” from the June 2012 issue of the Journal of the American Dental Association.

The article begins by reviewing the prevalence and consequences of tooth loss in older adults, which has implications for both oral and systemic health. It goes on to present the results of a study to describe tooth survival patterns, which were used to identify risk factors associated with tooth loss in an older cohort with diverse medical, functional and dental backgrounds.

#### KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- The presence of removable prostheses in combination with active caries compromises tooth survival in older adults.
- Caries not only increase the risk of experiencing tooth loss, but also significantly compromise the length of tooth survival.
- Patients who wear removable prostheses and had multiple carious teeth or retained roots when first seen have the highest risk of tooth loss soon after their existing dental conditions have been treated.
- The use of removable prostheses facilitates plaque accumulation, which significantly increases the risk of experiencing periodontal disease progression.
- Abutment teeth have a higher risk of experiencing accelerated periodontal breakdown and fracture.
- A systematic approach should be adopted to prevent and manage tooth loss in patients who wear removable prostheses and have multiple carious teeth or retained roots. This should include a thorough caries risk assessment, dietary changes, oral hygiene education, the development of preventive care strategies corresponding to such patients’ functional capacity and level of caregiver support, and a treatment plan that anticipates future changes in the dentition.
- A more aggressive preventive care strategy may include a shorter dental recall interval, as well as the use of fluoride treatment and an antimicrobial oral rinse.

**COLLEGE CONTACT** **Dr. Michael Gardner** – Manager, Quality Assurance  
416-934-5611 1-800-565-4591  
mgardner@rcdso.org