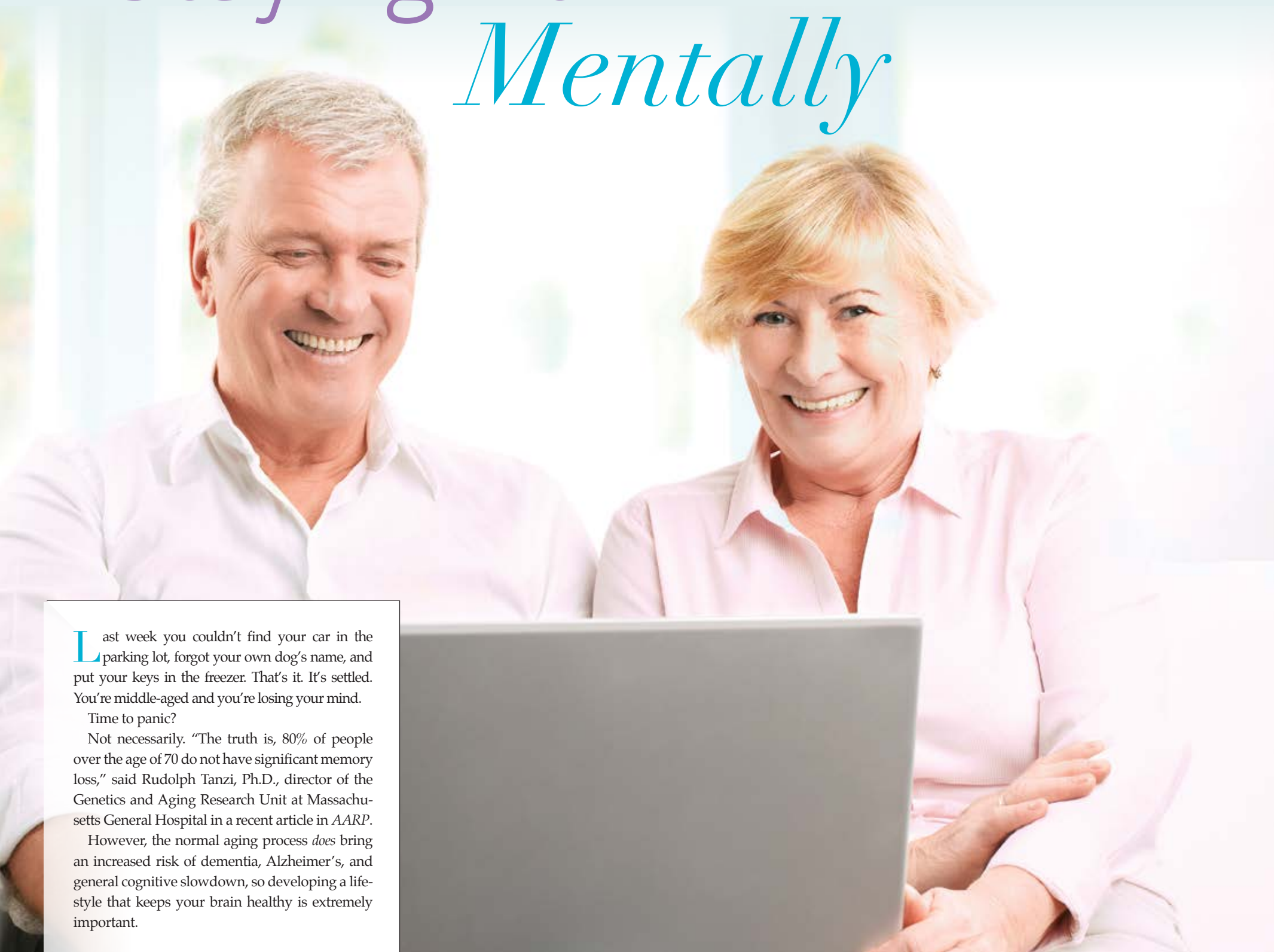


Staying Fit *Mentally*



Last week you couldn't find your car in the parking lot, forgot your own dog's name, and put your keys in the freezer. That's it. It's settled. You're middle-aged and you're losing your mind.

Time to panic?

Not necessarily. "The truth is, 80% of people over the age of 70 do not have significant memory loss," said Rudolph Tanzi, Ph.D., director of the Genetics and Aging Research Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital in a recent article in *AARP*.

However, the normal aging process *does* bring an increased risk of dementia, Alzheimer's, and general cognitive slowdown, so developing a lifestyle that keeps your brain healthy is extremely important.

Secrets of Keeping Your Brain Young and Maintaining Cognitive Health in Later Life

By Andrew Shaughnessy

The Aging Brain

Research shows that most mental capabilities peak in the mid- to late-20s. After that, we face an inevitable decline in "fluid intelligence," which includes short-term memory and the speed at which we process new information and solve problems. Senses lose their edge, reaction time slows, and our ability to multi-task diminishes. Brain volume decreases, dendritic connections (the brain's network) die off, and dopamine depletes at the rate of 5-8% per decade. Myelin, which isolates neurons, deteriorates, and the number of nerve fibers carrying messages through the central nervous system decreases. Bottom line: the brain, like the body, breaks down and slows down as we age.

However, some good things happen to the aging brain as well. You won't be as quick as you once were, but wisdom and experience make the golden years formational. Current research indicates that myelin loss seems to occur mostly on the part of neurons responsible for learning new things, while long-term memory stays intact, and complex reasoning skills improve into middle age. Additionally, research shows that as we age we become more empathetic and emotionally stable. Synapses* firing more slowly or not, it's no accident that nearly all CEOs are over the age of 50.

Keeping Your Brain in Shape

More and more, scientists and medical professionals are arguing that maintaining a high functioning brain well into old age is a product of a lifetime of care. Public health circles have long emphasized the importance of staying physically active as we age. More recently, staying *cognitively* active has become a focus. And the more scientists learn, the more they realize that physical and mental health go hand in hand. Keeping your brain healthy into middle age and beyond means pursuing a holistically healthy lifestyle: staying active physically, socially, occupationally, and intellectually.

In fact, research shows that physical exercise may even have a higher impact on keeping a brain active than mental stimulation. A recent study published in the journal *Neurology* reported that: "People in their 70s who participated in more physical exercise, including walking several times a week, had less brain shrinkage and other signs of aging in the brain than those who were less physically active."

Why? Many point to the fact that physical exertion increases the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the brain. Synapses fire off, new nerve cells develop, and

*Essential to neuronal function, a synapse is a structure that permits a neuron (or nerve cell) to pass an electrical or chemical signal to another cell.



WHERE YOU RECOVER AFFECTS **HOW** YOU RECOVER



At Kindred, we understand that when people are discharged from a traditional hospital, they often need continued care to recover completely. That's where we come in.

Our nationwide network of transitional care hospitals is designed for medically complex patients who require continued care and extended recovery time.

We specialize in:

- ventilator weaning and management
- complex wound care
- short-term rehabilitation
- dialysis
- IV antibiotic therapy

Doctors, case managers, social workers and family members don't stop caring simply because their loved one or patient has changed location.

Neither do we.



Healthcare Companies in the World, *Fortune* Magazine 2009 – 2013

**CONTINUE
THE CARE**

Kindred Hospital Chattanooga
709 Walnut Street • Chattanooga, TN 37402
423.266.7721 • 423.266.7516 fax
TN TDD/TTY# 800.848.0299 • www.kindredchattanooga.com

© 2013 Kindred Healthcare Operating, Inc. CSR 173164-01, EOE

Because of
SISKIN
HOSPITAL...

I can be
queen.

When 13-year-old Megan Morris began losing her balance and experiencing numbness in her legs, she knew something was terribly wrong. After becoming unable to walk, an emergency visit to the hospital revealed that she had Transverse Myelitis, an inflammation of her spinal cord.

Frightened and apprehensive about her future, Megan was admitted to Siskin Hospital. The caring staff quickly became family as they enabled Megan to cope with her illness, and more importantly, feel like a normal teenager again. They were there to help Megan learn to walk and care for herself and even surprised her with a birthday celebration. Today, Megan is a recent high school graduate pursuing her dreams for a bright future. Recently, she lived out the ultimate teenage girl's dream when she was crowned Homecoming Queen. It was the highlight of her senior year and one more proof that her life has endless possibilities.

Because of Siskin
Hospital, I CAN.

Siskin Hospital provides the best therapy care in Chattanooga. The experienced and dedicated staff at Siskin Hospital will guide patients with the most innovative and successful rehabilitation programs, services, and equipment in the Chattanooga area. Designed to fit individual needs and provide continuity of care, Siskin Hospital's Inpatient, Outpatient, and SubAcute Programs provide seamless care to promote health and independence. Siskin Hospital is the **ONLY rehabilitation hospital in the region** to be accredited by CARF, as well as the **ONLY rehabilitation hospital in the region** to be accredited by both CARF and Joint Commission, exemplifying that exceptional therapy is given by the caring staff every day. **For more information, visit www.SiskinRehab.org or call 423.634.1200.**





**EXPERT
ADVICE**

**Challenging
the Brain**

“Physical and mental activity helps keep your brain healthy. Try to get a good walk in every-day, do some chair aerobics, or even walk around the room while you talk on the phone. Crossword puzzles and word games are another way to keep your brain active. There are also social groups you can join that meet every week and offer new and different activities that will help promote your cognitive health.”

Abby Lockerby,
Community
Relations
Director,
Elmcroft of
Shallowford



endorphins fight off depression and anxiety. The Mayo Clinic calls exercise the “best bet” when it comes to preventing or delaying the onset of Alzheimer’s.

Beyond the gym, a healthy brain needs to be challenged. As we age, we tend to stick to the same activities, social circles, and routines that we’re used to because, well, it’s comfortable. It’s easy. But challenging the mind in new ways makes for better development and less atrophy. Think of it like cross training for physical fitness—your brain needs to be exercised and stretched in areas you don’t use every day.

So be a lifelong learner. Make it fun. Read a wide variety of books, teach yourself Bengali, learn to play blues piano, write letters to people you love, build something with your hands. Studies have shown that those who engage in a variety of mind-sharpening activities, not just in middle and old age but across a lifetime, have less buildup of

beta-amyloid protein (the plaque that builds up with Alzheimer’s).

Be involved in your community and socialize regularly. According to the Mayo Clinic, an active social life can help keep depression and stress at bay, both of which can contribute to memory loss. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, low fat proteins, B-vitamins, and whole grains can help manage your weight, decrease blood pressure, and keep both your heart and your brain healthy, while smoking and excessive drinking significantly increase the risk factor for dementia and early brain aging.

Then there’s the rise of computer-based “brain training” games, in which the user performs targeting tasks intended to exercise the brain like a muscle, maximizing its performance: recalling increasingly complex visual patterns, for example. Specially designed “brain gyms” for patients with Alzheimer’s and cognitive impair-

ment seem to have potential, though most are still in the early research stages. The computer games remain, but a more holistic approach includes social interaction, exercise, and lifestyle and nutritional coaching.

No “Quick Fix” Yet

There is no surefire way to prevent Alzheimer’s or memory loss. But here’s the take-away: What you do in your 30s and 40s matters. Foster lifelong patterns of behavior that keep you physically and mentally active. A lifestyle geared towards a healthy brain begins now.

Location. *Lifestyle.* Location.

Experience the lifestyle that Chattanooga’s first master planned retirement community offers.

Nestled amid the natural beauty of surrounding mountains and meadows, Greenbriar Cove is specially designed for active adults aged 55 and older. Situated in the heart of Collegedale, a small, culturally rich town, Greenbriar Cove is only 30 minutes from downtown Chattanooga. Everything from housing and healthcare to recreation and commerce has been anticipated and incorporated into the design of Greenbriar Cove. Residents choose more than just a house – they choose a lifestyle. The 100-acre community enhances the quality of life and features a network of user-friendly streets with old-fashioned streetlights,

sidewalks, walking trails and golf cart paths. Easy access to 17 acres of parkland and conservation areas, including four lakes and the community center, helps Greenbriar Cove bring serenity to life. An assisted living facility and Alzheimer’s care center on campus provide a full scope of services, truly making Greenbriar Cove the community to call home. Located at 4607 Ooltewah-Ringgold Road, site of the Monroe farm for more than 60 years, Greenbriar Cove proudly upholds the tradition of restful retirement, appreciation for nature and commitment to maintaining the integrity of the land for future generations.

Home and lot sales – Janell Liles: (423) 304-8599 | Assisted Living: (423) 396-6999 | Alzheimer’s/Memory Care: (423) 396-4700
General information: (423) 238-7999 | www.seegreenbriarcove.com

Full Time, Respite & Adult Daycare 24 Hour Personal Care

Nestled in the valley of Trenton, GA, just 20 minutes from Chattanooga, our care and assist home provides 24 hour assistance from a trained staff for those wanting to retain independence in a warm, comfortable environment.

6246 Highway 136,
Trenton, GA 30752
706-657-5216
woodhavenpch.com

Soddy Daisy Healthcare & Rehabilitation Center

Getting you back
to the ones you love...

Rehabilitation Services
Physical Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Speech Therapy
Outpatient Therapy

Quality Care with
a touch of home...

Skilled Care
Traditional Care
Respite Care

Serving You
From Our Heart

701 Sequoyah Road
Soddy Daisy, TN 37379
(423) 332-0060

A Lasting Smile:

HOW SENIORS CAN KEEP THEIR PEARLY WHITES

By Heidi Tompkins, Life Care Public Relations

You may not think about it from day to day, but good oral hygiene affects so much of life, from our smile to the length of our lives.

Seniors especially face challenges with dental care and should be intentional about maintaining the health of their teeth and gums.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 25 percent of American adults age 65 or older are dealing with gum disease, and the same percentage of adults 60 or older have lost all of their natural teeth. In Tennessee, the percentage of complete tooth loss for those 65 and up is 31.5 percent, with more than half of the senior population having lost at least six teeth.

As we age, dental care can become more challenging. However, tooth loss is not a foregone conclusion. The good news is that several simple steps can help seniors reduce the risks of cavities, periodontal (gum) disease and oral cancers.

Key elements to good oral health include dental hygiene, regular dental visits, nutrition and medication management.

Dental Hygiene

Brushing and flossing regularly is vital to oral health at any age. Both the CDC and the American Dental Association recommend using fluoride toothpaste to combat plaque most effectively and using a soft-bristled toothbrush for flexibility and comfort.

Dr. John Sines Jr. with Family and Cosmetic Dentistry in Ooltewah emphasizes the importance of simple brushing and flossing.

“If seniors can just keep the plaque from building up, then they can have a whole better lifestyle,” Sines shared. “Plaque contains bacteria, not just food. After breakfast, brush your teeth. After lunch, brush your teeth. After dinner, brush your teeth.”

Seniors can keep up good dental hygiene even with arthritis or other conditions that make handling

a toothbrush or floss tricky. Electric toothbrushes are one tool (even a cheap model is effective), and flossing sticks can help avoid the intricate fingerwork needed with traditional floss.

Regular Dental Visits

The general recommendation is to visit a dentist every six months, though both the CDC and ADA emphasize that at least once a year is vital to maintain dental health.

“A misconception I hear from some seniors is that visiting the dentist regularly is not as important as they get older,” shared Mark Hood, registered nurse and vice president of clinical systems for Life Care Centers of America. “In fact, regular dental visits should be a part of a person’s routine in order to help detect and treat conditions that involve the mouth, teeth and gums. Early detection and treatment is very important when dealing with anything related to your health.”

The biggest challenge here may be the cost of dental visits. Medicare does not cover them, though some supplement plans offer minimal assistance.

Resources for Paying for Dental Visits

(Source: American Dental Association, ada.org)

- *AARP’s supplemental dental insurance* (aarphealthcare.com/insurance/dental-insurance.html)
- *Discount dental plans through the National Association of Dental Plans* (nadp.org)
- *Local options for no-interest or low-interest financing* (ask your dentist)

However, it is cheaper to deal with cavities and gum disease early.

Even if your mouth doesn’t hurt, routine checks are important. According to the CDC, periodontal disease affects more than 70 percent of seniors age 65 and older. And for many, the disease doesn’t begin to cause pain until it has progressed. If left untreated, it can cause tooth loss and even bone loss.

“We cannot reverse periodontal disease,” Sines cautioned, “but we can arrest or slow it.”

Dental offices have the tools to clean deeper than the daily home cleaning regimen, and dentists can offer individualized advice.

Nutrition and Medication Concerns

Maybe you haven’t thought about nutrition as an important step in caring for your teeth, but it is

What you put in your mouth directly impacts how bacteria grows.

The obvious correlation is with sugar. Eating sugary foods and drinks like soda or sweetened coffee can contribute to tooth decay, and even hidden sugars in processed foods can be a concern.

Good nutrition – eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains – is just as vital for dental health as it is for general health. Remember: It’s not only your teeth you need to take care of but your gums and the interior of your mouth as well.

Sometimes seniors with sensitive teeth or dentures gravitate toward softer foods rather than biting into big pieces of food, but there are ways around that dilemma. Hard fruits and vegetables, like apples or carrots, can be cut into smaller, easier-to-chew pieces.

Besides concerns over food, drinking alcohol and smoking are strongly linked to gum disease and oral cancers.

Medication Management

“The most common problem I see among my older patients is dry mouth,” said Sines.

According to the ADA, dry mouth is a common side effect of more than 500 medications. It is a problem because saliva is your body’s natural way of keeping your mouth clean and rebuilding tooth enamel.

Sines said he often sees decay around crowns and bridges as a result of dry mouth.

For these reasons, it is important to talk to your dentist about your medications and vitamins, so he or she can recommend ways to overcome the dryness. Simple ways to combat dry mouth include drinking water frequently, using mouthwashes specifically made for dry mouth, chewing sugarless gum and staying away from substances that further dry out the mouth (like coffee, alcohol and citrus).

You can also talk to your physician to see if you can change medications or lower the dosage (do not change your dosage without consulting your doctor first).

When it comes down to it, oral health is not just about helping you maintain your pearly whites. It is also about keeping you healthy, and that is something to smile about. *Life Care Centers of America*

