

# Something to smile about

## Healthy smiles for seniors



### How safe is your mouth?

Most people don't connect their mouths to the rest of their bodies. There is a link. As important members of the oral healthcare team, dental hygienists provide professional treatment and advice to help prevent gum disease and tooth decay, as well as to support and promote total wellness.

Gum or periodontal disease is one of the most common diseases in humans. If your gums bleed due to infection, bacteria can enter the blood stream or airways thereby increasing your chances of heart disease, stroke and respiratory disorders. Gum infections can also make it difficult to control diabetes.

Dental hygienists help control the bacteria causing gum disease and tooth decay. They work with you to help keep your mouth healthy and in so doing they make an important contribution to your overall health.

### Your partners in oral health

Dental hygienists are regulated prevention professionals. As members of the oral healthcare team, dental hygienists have a distinctive clinical and educational role to play in preventing gum disease and tooth decay. They not only clean your teeth, they provide professional assessment, education and advice to help you attain and maintain optimum oral health. See pg 69 or go to [www.odha.on.ca](http://www.odha.on.ca) or call 1-800-315-6342 for more information. ■

*Linda Quest of Hamilton works as a self-employed dental hygienist in several of the city's long-term care homes. Recent legislation enables dental hygienists to work independently outside the traditional dental office. With an increase in mobile services and independent clinics, Ontarians can choose their healthcare provider and have greater access to affordable oral care, especially important for those who are uninsured or are physically unable to travel to a dental office.*