Center Dental Clinic

Seniors can find solutions to dental issues

Senior dental care offers unique challenges, and the Center for Family Health is poised and ready to address them.

Older people often have extensive dental needs and their prescribed medications can cause dry mouth, said Dr. Diana Ellis, Dental Director. Dry mouth makes teeth more prone to cavities, particularly on exposed root surfaces, she said. Left untreated, those teeth can reach the point that they cannot be restored.

Further complicating senior dental care are complex medical issues and Medicare not covering dental care.

If seniors are not eligible for Medicaid or other dental benefits and are on a fixed income, they may delay dental care, making a fixable tooth not savable.

Thankfully, the Center is equipped to help those seniors through its HealthPay, a sliding discount payment program.

Center dentists encourage seniors to keep coming for six-month checkups to catch problems before they become too big to fix, Dr. Ellis said.

The staff also works with seniors on how to keep their mouths healthy through brushing and flossing tips in spite of decreased mobility from strokes or arthritis.

Dr. Ellis said other recommendations for seniors include rinsing with fluoride mouth rinses, drinking water frequently, and learning about how cavities are formed from the foods we eat.

It can be an increased challenge to keep their mouths healthy but possible when seniors maintain regular care, she said.

Although there are obstacles to senior dental care, the staff maintains its goal to provide high-quality care while keeping their patients comfortable, Dr. Ellis said.

The Center for Family Health is an independent, federally qualified health center that never turns patients away because of inability to pay. It provides comprehensive, quality medical care, dental services and behavioral-health assistance to more than 30,000 patients at its main location in Jackson, a dental center, four school health centers, and a satellite clinic at LifeWays.
When an alert is sent out, we need you to respond. You will be asked to contact your elected officials to share your story about our work and encourage lawmakers to fully fund and support community health centers. Please join our advocacy team. We need your help.

Center for Family Health | 505 N. Jackson St. | Jackson, MI 49201 | 517-748-5500

**Get to Know Dr. Kathryn Thornton**

- Dr. Kathryn Thornton became a dentist at the Center for Family Health Dental Clinic in 2015, a reflection of her commitment to community-based dentistry.
- “I really wanted to practice in community health,” she said. “I think good health should be a possibility for everyone.”
- Dr. Thornton grew up in Toledo, Ohio, and studied biomedical engineering at Boston University before earning her dental degree at Harvard University. She has a master’s degree in public health from the University of Michigan and is currently pursuing her doctorate at Michigan State University.
- She and her husband, Eduardo, have three children between the ages of 1 and 10, and Dr. Thornton is particularly committed to providing care to the Center’s younger dental patients.

“My passion is working with children, and we’re often helping families who may have nowhere else to go for care.”

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**MEET CENTER DENTIST DR. KATHRYN THORNTON**

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**Walk-In Clinic adds nurse practitioner**

Whitney Newsom, a Family Nurse Practitioner, is seeing patients at the Center for Family Health’s Walk-In Clinic.

Newsom earned a Bachelor’s in Nursing from Rochester College in Rochester Hills, MI, and a Master’s in Nursing from Maryville University in St. Louis, MO. She is board certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

Prior to joining the Center, Newsom worked as a Family Nurse Practitioner at the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Baraga, MI, and also worked as a registered nurse at St. Joseph Mercy Oakland in Pontiac, MI.

A member of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, Newsom has an identical twin sister who also is a nurse practitioner. Newsom played basketball in college and has rescued a greyhound.

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**News in Brief**

**Sports physicals important**

Every year hundreds of Jackson County middle school and high school athletes scramble to get their sports physicals before fall practices begin.

The Center for Family Health is hoping to eliminate the scramble through advertising its services, available to all. It also is hosting two Saturday K105.3 radio remotes at two of its school health centers where sports physicals will be available.

Dates will be advertised in the coming weeks. Stay tuned!

**Join us for a tour**

Center for Family Health hosts tours throughout the year.

Join us for a behind-the-scenes look at how your support helps patients daily. We look forward to sharing stories, like those often shared in our newsletter, of patients who did not have access to health care before coming to the Center.

All tours are held from 5:30 pm to 7:15 pm and include dinner. RSVP is requested.

Please contact Jessica, Tour and Ambassador Manager, for tour dates at jessicaembury777@msn.com.

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**More advocacy advocates needed**

The Center for Family Health now has Silver ACE status! If you wonder what that is, ACE means “Advocacy Center of Excellence.”

The National Association of Community Health Centers awarded the designation last spring in recognition of the Center’s “ongoing commitment to advocacy by making it an organizational priority.”

“Advocacy” means being actively engaged in federal and state policy issues that impact health centers, patients and health care in general. Patients – and community members who would like to join our active network of health-center advocates – can sign up online at hcadvocacy.org to receive action alerts.

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Please join our advocacy team. We need your help.