Painless Dental Bytes

Compliments of Edward J. Zuckerberg, D.D.S., F.A.G.D. <<header1>>

News From the Office of:

Dr. Edward J. Zuckerberg

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We're pleased to have this opportunity to bring you and your family information on good dental health, and on how to make the most of your smile at every stage of your life. Please check out the inside articles in this issue for some practical oral health tips.

If you're looking for a pick-me-up, consider the benefits of teeth whitening. Quick, easy, safe and effective, teeth whitening can result in a brighter smile and a younger, more vibrant appearance.

Enjoy this newsletter, and please feel free to pass it on to friends and family members so they can read up on the latest dental health news.

Thank you for your continued patronage. We look forward to seeing you again soon!

Edward J. Zuckerberg

Dr. Edward J. Zuckerberg

COUNTDOWN TO THE PERFECT WEDDING SMILE

Every bride dreams of walking down the aisle, stunning white dress cascading behind her, beaming groom waiting to take her hand. But wait — are the smiles photographer-ready, all set to feature in photos that will be viewed for generations to come?

Whether you're the bride, groom, member of the wedding party or honored family member or friend, you'll want to make sure your smile is photo-ready for the big day by coming in for a dental consultation as soon as you know the wedding date.

Unsure of the health of your mouth, and the degree of work that needs to be done, you are wise to address fixing your smile sooner rather than later. So many factors are involved in creating the perfect smile, starting with the condition of the teeth and gums, the spacing and straightness of the teeth, the condition of any fillings, crowns or other existing dental work and, of course, the color of the teeth.

Teeth that are chipped, broken or cracked, or that have small spaces between them, can often be improved with simple, non-invasive bonding.

Veneers — thin shells of porcelain that are individually crafted to bond onto the front of each tooth to close gaps, hide surface ridges and otherwise correct uneven or chipped teeth — are another popular pre-wedding option.

And, of course, tooth whitening, the easiest, fastest way for healthy, straight teeth to gain a cosmetic advantage, is a favored procedure that can make the difference between an everyday smile and a once-in-a-lifetime-event smile.

Why allow an imperfect smile to make you self-conscious on one of the most important days of your life? At the very least, make sure you come in to have your teeth cleaned and checked well before your wedding, to ensure that your dental health is in top form, especially if you are going out of town for your honeymoon. After all, "for better or for worse" needn't start in a foreign dental chair, with your new spouse holding one hand and paying for emergency dental work with the other!

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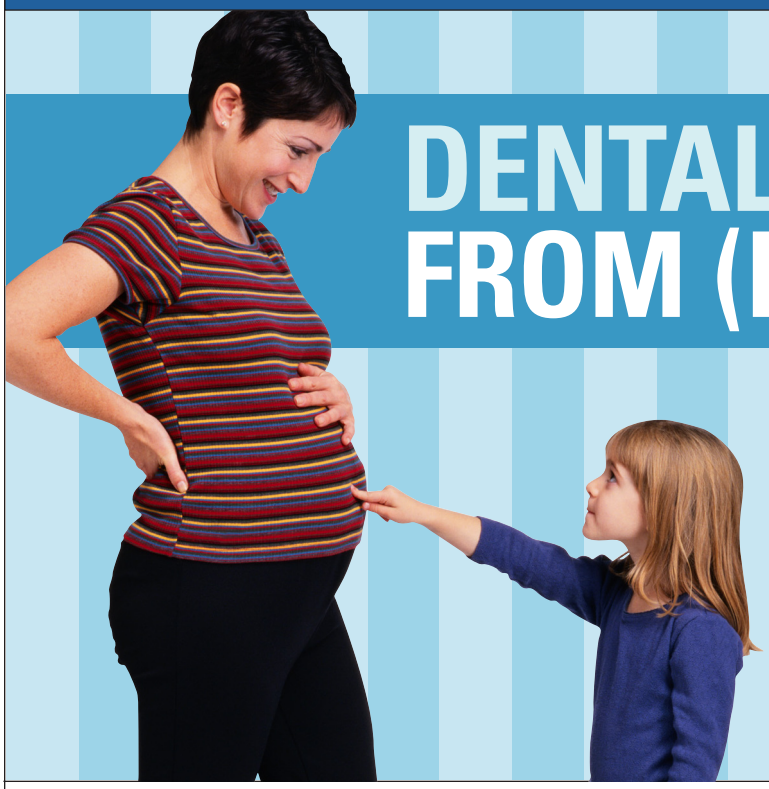
DENTAL CARE FROM (BEFORE) DAY 1



Upon determining pregnancy, many women believe they should avoid seeing the dentist until their babies are born. In fact, the opposite is true: Pregnancy is a time to pay extra attention to your dental health, for both your and your baby's sake.

Pregnancy and its related hormonal changes exaggerate the effects from plaque irritants. And as you know, the acids in plaque can lead to tooth decay, gum tissue inflammation and, if neglected, eventual tooth loss. A healthy diet, daily tooth brushing and flossing, and a continued — even increased — schedule of regular dental hygiene visits are especially important for pregnant women. Please advise us if you are expecting, before your dental appointment commences.

Once baby arrives, you will need advice on dental care for his or her gums and primary teeth.

Believe it or not, research reveals that cavities are contagious, especially for babies and younger children! Children can develop tooth decay from being exposed to certain bacteria passed on from their parents. The transmission can come from sharing utensils, or any other activity that might transmit even a minute particle of saliva transferred from one mouth to another. By keeping their own teeth clean, healthy and free of decay, parents can help reduce their children's exposure to decay-causing bacteria, and therefore reduce the chances of cavities in their children's early years.

At the other end of the dental spectrum are seniors, and their specific dental needs.

Seniors are living longer than ever and, happily, preserving their natural teeth longer than previous generations, too. The inevitable inconvenience of tooth loss in senior years is fading, as seniors today are recognizing that vigilant oral hygiene combats age-related tooth loss.

The understanding that tooth loss is due to oral disease, rather than the result of how many years the teeth have been in service, is an enlightening moment for many.

In addition to regular dental cleanings and checkups, open communication is also part of the long-term oral health formula for seniors. Many people require more medications as they age. The downside to some medications is their side effects on dental health.

It's important that patients keep the dentist informed on their health conditions, and any medications they are on. For example, many medications cause a decrease in the saliva flow, which can lead to a dry mouth, subsequent dental decay — often showing up in the roots of teeth where the gums have receded to expose them — and possible tooth loss. It is imperative that dentists keep patients' medical records updated — not only can this help explain some of the dental problems a patient may experience, it can also prevent potentially harmful drug interactions within the dental office.

There are different dental considerations, at every stage of life. Only with consistent daily dental care, and regularly scheduled continuing care dental appointments, can we improve our chances of healthy smiles right into our twilight years.

PAIN-FREE, DECAY-FREE?

You'd schedule a dental appointment if you have a chronic toothache, probably suspecting a cavity. However, do toothache-free mouths signal cavity-free teeth? Not necessarily, and here's why.

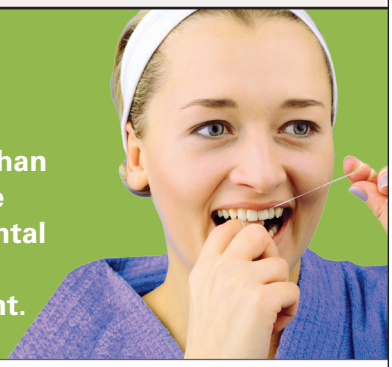
Decayed teeth may or may not cause a toothache, depending on the location and depth of the decay. For example, if the cavity is in the tooth enamel — the outer layer of the tooth — you probably wouldn't feel a thing. It's only after the decay continues through the enamel to the dentin — the softer, mid-layer of the tooth that lies between the enamel and the pulp — that you will start feeling the telltale toothache throb.

Catching the decay while it is on the enamel layer of your tooth or in the dentin usually ensures that any damage can be repaired, and your tooth can be saved. However, once the decay makes its way into the nerve-filled pulp at the center of the tooth, the situation gets more complicated. Depending on the degree of decay, you may need to undergo a root canal to save the tooth. If the degree is large, the tooth may need to be extracted.

Saving yourself unnecessary discomfort, aggravation and money at the dentist can be as easy as following a consistent routine of flossing daily, brushing your teeth at least twice a day, and seeing your dentist regularly for a thorough cleaning and oral examination. In many cases, we can see what you can't yet feel, and can recommend treatment plans that will address small dental issues before they become big, uncomfortable problems.

SQUEAKY CLEAN, IN-BETWEEN

A great deal of attention is given to cosmetic dentistry these days. It's easier than ever to get a bigger, brighter, whiter smile. But just as a woman would prepare her fingernails to be clean, smooth and healthy before applying nail polish, dental patients need to ensure their teeth are well maintained and their gums are healthy before considering teeth whitening or any other cosmetic improvement.



Most people appreciate the importance of brushing their teeth at least twice a day, but many fall by the wayside when it's time for daily flossing.

Cleaning your teeth properly includes cleaning between your teeth, and the best way to clean between your teeth, and the other places your toothbrush can't reach, is with flossing. Flossing removes bacterial plaque — the stuff that causes tooth decay and gum disease.

Practice the following flossing technique for best results:

1. **Break off about 18 inches of floss** and wrap it around the middle finger of each hand, leaving a couple of inches of floss in-between to work with.
2. **Using your thumbs and forefingers,** tighten the floss and guide it between your teeth, curving it in a "C" shape around the base of each tooth — as deep in the gum as you comfortably can. Slide the floss up and down the tooth two or three times, using a gentle rubbing motion.
3. **Move to a clean area of floss** and repeat on both sides of each tooth, including the back side of the last teeth.

Don't be discouraged if at first flossing feels awkward — it will come naturally after a few tries. And please, ask us to demonstrate the proper technique, and we'd be happy to recommend different types of floss to try, to help you find your perfect kind. As well, there are alternative interdental cleaners you may find easier to manage. Simply ask us to explain your options at your next visit.

JEWELRY JEOPARDY

There are two oral fashions causing concern for dentists these days: The prevalence of oral piercing, and the application of dental "grills."

Oral piercing, because of the millions of bacteria in the mouth, brings a high risk of pain, swelling and infection. Piercing the tongue can lead to uncontrollable bleeding, nerve damage, and even enough swelling to block the airway. As well, mouth jewelry increases the risk of chipped or cracked teeth, and receding gums, which can lead to loose teeth and eventual tooth loss.

Some of today's musicians and athletes flaunt "grills," which are precious metal tooth covers that snap over their teeth. Young fans often try to emulate the "bling" look with grills made of base metals, which may cause irritation or allergic reactions.

Proper oral hygiene is paramount when wearing grills, as food can get trapped between the teeth and the grill, allowing bacteria to collect and produce acids, which can cause tooth decay, harm gums and contribute to bad breath. As well, extended wear can also lead to irritation on the surrounding oral tissues and enamel wear on the opposing teeth.

If you choose to follow one of these fashions, please check with your dental team first for tips on ensuring your dental health and safety.

COLD SORE, CANKER OR CANCER?

Occasionally, many of us experience a bump or sore in or around our mouths. But at what point should we seek a professional opinion? First, familiarize yourself with the following likely culprits.

Cold sores usually occur outside the mouth, and last about a week. Caused by the very contagious herpes simplex virus, cold sores are painful, fluid-filled blisters around the lips, sometimes spreading to under the nose and to the chin.

Canker sores, on the other hand, are found inside the mouth. They appear as small white swellings or sores, surrounded by a red patch, and heal naturally within 10 days, usually.

Oral cancer can appear in different forms: Sores in the mouth that bleed easily or do not heal; a lump, thickening rough spot; crust or small eroded area anywhere in or around the mouth; a feeling something is caught in the throat; and a number of other forms.

If your mouth sore doesn't go away and you're worried about it, please come in so we can carefully examine it.

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