

Hope & Healing

Mouth and Teeth Care

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

A pretty smile is a bonus at any age. All too often we fail to collect our bonuses because we give our teeth inadequate care when we are young. Then we end up at 65 with dentures, missing teeth, worn down teeth, or badly stained enamel. The idea of preventive dental care is not so old and many people aren't used to it. This may mean that they haven't learned the basics of good mouth and teeth health. This is a good time to begin.

Tooth Decay _____

Tooth decay, the development of cavities, is a lifelong problem as long as we have natural teeth. Cavities are caused by too much sugar in the diet and the formation of plaque.

If you brushed your teeth hours ago, pass your tongue across the surface of your teeth. Feel the patches of slightly rough, sticky material. This is plaque. Plaque is a mixture of mucus, food, and germs. These germs live in the mouth naturally. They thrive on sugar from the foods we eat. As the germs eat some of our sugar they produce acid.

The acid bores tiny holes in the enamel covering our tooth, killing it, or causing an abscess. An abscessed tooth causes a tooth ache. A tooth ache is a cry for help. The best thing to do is to prevent cavities in the first place.

Preventing Cavities _____

Research has shown that adding fluoride to the water supply is the best and least costly way to prevent cavities.

Adding fluoride to our drinking water is done by our health authorities.

In addition, there is a lot that we can do personally to prevent cavities. These measures are listed here for your reference:

- Brush your teeth after breakfast and before going to bed. Floss your teeth once a day.
- Ask your dentist about fluoride treatments and the use of sealants for children. This is usually done once a year for children age 12 and under.
- Use a fluoride containing toothpaste.
- Ask your dentist about fluoride mouth rinses.
- Eat fewer sweets.
- If you are not able to brush after eating sweets, use one of nature's teeth cleaners; eat an apple, raw carrots, celery, or a piece of cheese. Cheese neutralizes the acid.
- Consider a sonic toothbrush.

Gum Disease _____

Gum Disease (gingivitis) is a common cause of tooth loss after age 35. Vitamin deficiencies, certain medications, some glandular disorders, and blood diseases can also cause gum disease.

The basic cause of gum disease is plaque buildup. Plaque must be removed every day or it may harden on the teeth and become tarter or calculus, which is so hard that a metal scaler must be used to remove it.

The gum disease develops as the germs in the plaque irritate the gums, causing them to bleed and creating pockets of infection that form between the teeth and the gums. The gums are

pushed away from the teeth allowing the infection to go down to the roots of teeth. Eventually teeth become loose and are lost.

Most cases of gum disease can be treated and returned to normal, then it's up to you to keep it from returning by brushing and flossing daily.

Mouth and Tongue _____

Your mouth is kept moist by saliva produced by three sets of glands that pour the juice out in response to foods, especially foods that have a tart taste. The surface of your tongue is covered by tiny lumps or papillae that contain taste buds. Taste buds can distinguish four main types of flavor: sweet, sour, salt and bitter. Taste buds appreciate a fine meal and also tell you if food is spoiled.

Most disorders of the tongue and mouth are not serious and are easy to treat. It is possible, however, for a cancer to begin in the mouth or on the tongue and any sore that doesn't heal within three weeks should be examined by your doctor.

Mouth Sores _____

Fever blisters or cold sores are a problem caused by the herpes virus. They are usually found on the lips, although they can sometimes appear inside the mouth. They begin as blisters, but often the blisters have ruptured and only the remaining sore is seen.

The herpes virus can live in the body for years without causing trouble. Then, when another illness causes the body temperature to rise, the fever blisters break out. Fever blisters heal by themselves several days after the fever

falls.

Aphthous ulcers usually appear inside the mouth and are discovered when an acidic food or drink causes a burning or stinging. They are most common in young women and occur just before the menstrual period. They usually heal within six to seven days only to reappear in an unpredictable time schedule.

The Coxsackie Virus can also cause mouth lesions in children. There are accompanying spots on the hands and feet. So, the problem is called the "hand, foot, and mouth syndrome." The child feels well and there is no fever and the problem clears up by itself.

Drugs can cause mouth ulcers. If you are taking a medicine and develop mouth ulcers, don't take any more of the medicine and notify your doctor immediately.

Cancer of the lip or gum is rare. Syphilis can also cause a mouth ulcer. Both of these conditions are painless. There are other rare conditions that cause mouth ulcers that are accompanied by fever and joint and eye problems. They require your doctor's evaluation for clarification of their importance and cause.

Home Treatment

Mouth sores caused by viruses and aphthous ulcers will heal themselves. Until then, especially in children, you can relieve pain and fever, if there is any, with either acetaminophen or Ibuprofen. Eating may be painful but adequate. Fluids can be maintained through the use of cold, soothing liquids, like popsicles, or iced frozen juices — not of the acidic variety. Orabase, a non-prescription ointment may be used on the inside of the lip and on the gum. For fever blisters a phenol and camphor preparation such as Blistex or Camphophenique can be used to relieve pain. Cool compresses can be used to remove crusting that sometimes develops. Mouth sores usually resolve in one to two weeks, but any sore that persists beyond three weeks will need to be seen by your doctor.

Oral Thrush

Most people have thrush at some time in their lives. Children and elderly people have it more than others. It is caused by the same fungus that causes yeast infections of the vagina in women.

The cause of thrush is present in small numbers naturally. It multiplies until it is out of control when something upsets the natural defenses of the body. This may be the use of an antibiotic or a lowered resistance caused by an immune problem, such as diabetes or cancer.

Thrush causes a whitish sore patch on your tongue or elsewhere in the mouth or throat. It is a condition your doctor will need to evaluate to see if there is an underlying problem. And then the doctor can plan the measures to deal with whatever was found as well as prescribe medicines to cure the thrush.

Summary

A toothache is the sad reminder of a poor program of dental hygiene. The majority of dental problems are preventable through a regular program of tooth brushing with a fluoride toothpaste, flossing, professional cleaning, and in children, the use of sealants and fluoride applications.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of the Worm

The butterfly is a miracle. But he wasn't always a butterfly. He began as a humble caterpillar, living on a leaf in the forest.

Then, one day something happened. The leaf was no longer the thing. The worm became dissatisfied. Divine discontent stirred within him. He didn't say "I hate being a worm," and let it go at that. He felt the need to go on to a bigger, finer, more interesting life. And, "Where there's a will, there's a way."

So, a miracle happened, the worm disappeared, and the butterfly emerged and soared off to see the world.

You might say, "Well, the worm was programmed to become a butterfly."

That's the point. Each of us is wonderfully equipped and programmed to become whatever our creative imagination develops.

Thus, we can fly away to our heart's desire.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.