

DENTAL HEALTH IN TEENS

A Dangerous Disease

Gum disease in teenagers is very dangerous to oral health. The disease progresses quickly and may be advanced before it is discovered. It can result in bone and connective tissue loss, which leads to tooth loss.

There are several causes linked to juvenile periodontitis, a disease which may afflict as many as ten percent of teens. The main cause is a bacterial infection to which teens may be more susceptible because of hormonal changes. A genetic link through the X chromosome may explain why the disease is more prevalent in girls than in boys. Less-than-adequate oral care and too few dental checkups are other contributing factors.

Fortunately, when detected

early, juvenile periodontitis can be successfully treated. When teens get regular x-rays, the disease can be discovered before it has caused significant damage. Once a diagnosis is made, scaling and root planing will probably be recommended. An antibiotic course is sometimes recommended as well.

Because gum disease in young people often exhibits no symptoms until the disease has progressed, early detection through regular dental checkups and x-rays is very important. Scrupulous home care is another factor. Encourage your teen to brush carefully and floss regularly, and bring him or her in for scheduled exams to eliminate periodontal disease before it gains a foothold.

Clean pennies, damaged teeth

Ever use cola to clean pennies? It's easy, just throw some dirty pennies in a container with some cola and let them soak overnight. In the morning, you'll have clean pennies. The phosphoric and carbonic acids in the soda are responsible for the change. Ever wonder what those same acids do to your teeth?

What those acids do is damage dental enamel, and the sugar in those same sodas promotes dental caries (tooth decay). Couple this with caffeine to keep us all jittery and the empty calories to fill us up without providing necessary nutrients, and you have a recipe for nutritional disaster. According to statistics, each of us drinks an average of 50 gallons of soda each year. In our opinion, that's way too much. Cutting back on soda and replacing it with cold, fresh water is a good idea. What if you just can't give up your cola? Try brushing or at least rinsing with clean water right after drinking. This will help remove acids and sugars that damage your teeth.



DO WE PASS YOUR EXAM?

There are several things every good dental office should be doing for you over the course of your visits with them. Take a look at the list below and let us know if you think we're making the grade.

ARE WE:

- warm and friendly toward you and your family?
- prepared and willing to answer your questions?
- checking on your health history to see whether there have been any major changes we should know about?

DO WE:

- take x-rays on a regular basis?
- examine you for signs of periodontal disease?
- perform a visual oral cancer check?
- inspect jaw and bite alignment?
- give your teeth a thorough cleaning?
- explain any procedures we recommend and answer your questions about them thoroughly?
- offer you ideas and techniques that will help you take better care of your teeth and gums?

If you don't think we're performing up to par, let us know. We always welcome comments that can help us improve the service we offer you.

THE BEST BRUSH

There are always new toothbrushes coming on to the market. Some have rounded bristles, others have thicker handles, and all claim to be the best at removing plaque. Which brush is best for you?

According to research, the best brush for you is the brush *you* like best—as long as it is a soft-bristled brush. In other words, the brush that feels best in your hand and allows you to feel that you've done an effective brushing job is the one you should choose.

One study involving dental students looked at three different brushes—a conventional brush, one with staggered bristles and a curved handle, and a third with angled bristles and a somewhat angled head. In the study, all three brushes were found to remove significant amounts of plaque, but more importantly, the researchers found that brushing technique was much more important to efficient plaque removal than brush design.

However, the study also found that participants brushed better when they were using a brush they liked. In conclusion, if you like the feel of a brush and you think you're brushing better with it, you probably are.

To keep your brushing technique up-to-date, review the steps below and follow them carefully, using a soft-bristled brush of your choosing.

First, place the brush at a 45-degree angle against your teeth and angle the bristles toward the gumline. Brush groups of two to three teeth at a time, being sure to brush both the gum and the tooth.

Second, pay attention to your technique. Be gentle, but diligent. There's no need to push the bristles under the gums. If you have the brush angled properly, this area should be cleaned sufficiently.

Third, do a thorough job. Cover the outer surfaces of your top and bottom teeth, and the inside surfaces as well. For the insides of front teeth, use several up-and-down motions to clean the teeth and gums.



EMERGENCY TOOTHACHE TREATMENT

It's 3:00 a.m. on Monday morning and you wake up with an excruciating toothache. You know you've got a few hours before you can get to our office, so what do you do?

Begin by cleaning the area around the sore tooth as best as you are able. Use dental floss if it's not too painful, and/or rinse with warm salt water to remove any debris around the tooth. Applying a warm, wet compress to the outside of your cheek or jaw where the pain is located can be helpful. In addition, taking an analgesic—like

aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen—may help relieve the discomfort. If you suspect there's a cavity in the tooth, a drop of Oil of Cloves applied directly to the tooth with a dropper or a bit of cotton can sometimes help.

As soon as you can, seek professional treatment. A toothache can be the result of a bacterial infection which may spread if left untreated. Prompt professional diagnosis and treatment of any tooth pain is the best course of action to avoid further dental problems.

