

The New Dental Times

Produced for the patients of:
Beth D. Vander Schaaf, D.D.S. and Douglas O. Beischel, D.D.S.

Summer 2003

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The strongest bond

Sometimes, teeth become loose. There are many reasons for this. Periodontal disease is the most common one, but accidents can also cause loosening of some teeth.

When this occurs, there is a technique called *splinting* that can be used to help hold teeth in place and give them the support they need. Splinting may involve the use of many different materials, including wire and/or composite materials. During the procedure, care will be taken to be sure that the bite remains consistent and that the patient will still be able to clean the teeth thoroughly to avoid decay.

Because this procedure involves bonding, spaces between teeth can be corrected at the same time. In this way, splinting actually improves the look of the patient's smile. Sometimes, splints are only a temporary solution to the problem. At other times, a fixed bridge may be used to make the changes permanent. Splinting the teeth is often the best way to help hold them in place and enhance the smile at the same time.

DO YOU KNOW THE SIGNS OF ORAL CANCER?

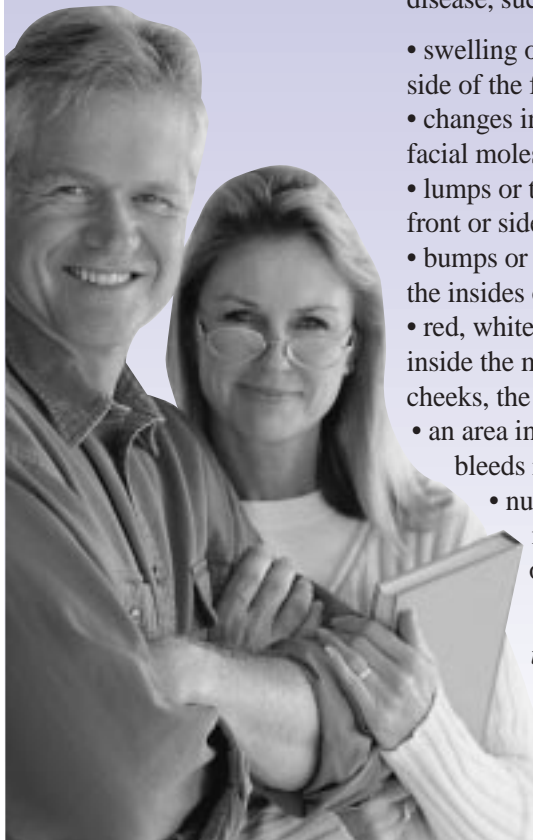
Whenever you are in our office for a checkup, we do an oral-cancer screening as well. Whether you are at high risk for this disease or not, an oral cancer exam is part of our thorough dental examination. Recent studies have shown that many people are not aware of the symptoms or risk factors for oral cancer, and many don't realize that their dentists are doing regular exams.

People who have a tendency to chew on their lips or the insides of their cheeks raise their chances of developing oral cancer. Those who are exposed to too much sunlight run an increased risk as well. Those who smoke and use alcohol excessively may run the highest risk of all.

Patients who feel they are at increased risk of developing oral cancer should be aware of signs and symptoms of the disease, such as:

- swelling or bumps on one side of the face.
- changes in the size or color of facial moles or growths.
- lumps or tender areas in the front or sides of the neck.
- bumps or texture changes on the insides or outsides of lips.
- red, white, or darkened areas inside the mouth on gums, cheeks, the tongue, or lips.
- an area in the mouth that bleeds repeatedly.
- numb feelings in the mouth, the face, or on the neck.

Ask us for more information on how to detect signs of oral cancer.



Thank you for all your referrals. We appreciate them!



What are you taking?

When you visit our office, it's important for us to know if you're taking any medications, what those medications are, and for which conditions you are taking them. We need to know this in order to avoid interactions with sedatives and/or to be aware of how these medications may affect your dental health. For these same reasons, we also need to know if patients are taking supplements or herbs.

Herbs, such as Ginko biloba, can affect your health, especially if they are taken along with other medications, such as blood thinners. Many patients think that because herbs are natural substances and aren't regulated as drugs, they don't affect them the way medications might, but that isn't necessarily true.

Herbs and supplements, *because* they are not tested or regulated, may have effects on the body that aren't expected, especially when taken in large doses. Vitamins fall into this category as well.

Play it safe by informing both your personal physician and our office of all the supplements, herbs, and medications you are taking. We want to know how they may affect your oral health or any procedures we might want to perform.

THE 3,000-MILE DENTAL CHECKUP

Statistics tell us that men are more likely to schedule timely oil-change appointments for their cars than dental-exam appointments for themselves. No wonder men lose five teeth or more before the age of 75. (Men who smoke may lose twice that many.)

What can be done to help convince men that their teeth are just as important as the oil that lubricates their car engines? One way is to remind them of the connection between a longer life and having healthy teeth and gums. But, just in case that doesn't convince them, try these arguments:



THE COSMETIC CONNECTION

Remind them that cleaner teeth and fresher breath are the immediate benefits of good oral hygiene. If you know a man who isn't happy with the look of his teeth, point out the myriad of options available to straighten, whiten, and simply enhance his smile.

JOG THE JOCK

If he likes to work out and stay in shape, remind him that his teeth need care along with the rest of his body. You might even recommend that he have a custom mouthguard fitted to protect his pearly whites while he participates in that Wednesday night basketball game or other contact sport.

EMPHASIZE HEALTH

Overall health, as mentioned before, has been linked to good oral health. Checking for early signs of oral cancer is one of the things we hope to do when patients see us regularly. About twice as many men as women develop oral cancer, so it's imperative that men have regular checkups to watch for this insidious disease. Men should also be aware that there is a relationship between periodontal disease and coronary artery disease.

THINGS THAT DON'T CHANGE

There are some things about the mouth that change as we age. Gums do tend to recede, for instance. However, there are also myths surrounding oral health and aging. Let's debunk a few of them.

Losing your senses? At one time, it was believed that as we aged, we actually lost taste buds. More recently, studies have shown that although taste buds don't diminish, the sense of smell does. Because olfactory senses are strongly linked to taste, the sense of taste may change

somewhat as we age, but not because of a lack of taste buds.

Feeling on the dry side? Loss of salivary flow and the resulting dry mouth have also been considered a standard part of aging. Studies have shown that although salivary glands do change with age, healthy individuals of any age should not suffer from dry mouth. The problem with seniors is often linked and/or associated with certain medications or illnesses that can cause dry mouth.

Healthy teeth...



healthy gums

and abscess will develop, making treatment a necessity.

The teeth aren't alone in being affected by plaque. When bacteria build up between the teeth and gums, they can cause inflammation and bleeding known as gingivitis. Untreated, gingivitis can progress into periodontal disease, which causes pockets to form between gums and teeth. When the gums no longer adhere to the teeth, the supporting bone is left open to destruction by the disease. Without treatment, the teeth will eventually loosen and fall out.

Preventing both tooth decay and periodontal disease requires scrupulous home care that includes daily:

- **flossing**—do this first to remove debris between teeth.
- **brushing**—to remove food debris and plaque on both front and back teeth.
- **irrigating**—which means rinsing when you're finished, either with plain water or with a fluoride rinse.
- **regular dental checkups**—on the schedule we recommend for you.

Regular checkups will allow us to keep your teeth free of tartar and to watch for decay or signs of periodontal disease that can be treated early to help you avoid extensive restorations or tooth loss. It's not difficult to have healthy teeth and gums. It just takes a little daily attention from you and then some regularly scheduled attention from us.



HAPPY SUMMER!

Because of our commitment to you, we'd like to offer some suggestions that might make summer easier on your dental health.

Avoid all-day sippers.

Soft drinks and sweetened iced teas feel good going down, but if you're drinking more than usual, you could be damaging your teeth. To quench your thirst, stick to cold water, or rinse with water after you drink a sugary drink.

Watch the sugar. Children tend to consume more sweets when school is out. Snack bars and stores brim with chewing gum and candies to tempt young taste buds. You can't deny sweets all the time, so opt for candy that dissolves quickly (chocolate) and doesn't stick to teeth. Rinse and brush after eating.

Guard your mouth.

Summer sports require mouthguards, too. Roller blading, skateboarding, baseball, and basketball can all mean danger for teeth. Talk to us about a custom mouthguard.

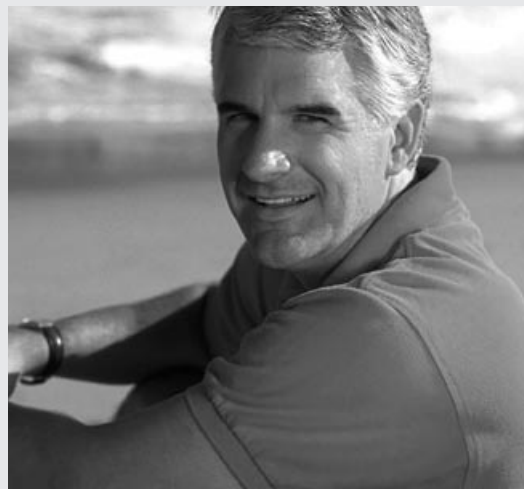
Don't forget about us.

Summer is a wonderful time. It's easy to miss a scheduled appointment or put off a procedure you need. Don't neglect your teeth just because the weather is nice.

We're here for you. We don't close up shop in the summer. We expect dental emergencies, so, if one occurs, don't hesitate to contact us.

AS WE AGE

Keeping your teeth? If you are over the age of 65 and still have your teeth, you are among the nearly 70 percent of seniors who have retained their natural teeth. Only two decades ago, about 50 percent of seniors lost their teeth by this age, and it was assumed that tooth loss was a natural part of aging. Preventive dentistry and changes in how teeth are restored have changed all that and allowed many more seniors to keep their teeth—and keep them healthy—for their lifetimes.



Beth D. Vander Schaaf, D.D.S.
Douglas O. Beischel, D.D.S.
7301 E. Thomas Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Here's your dental newsletter!

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Every time you inhale...

...on a cigarette, you take about 4,000 chemicals into your lungs. What do those chemicals do for you?

- cause your breath, clothes, and hair to smell bad
- numb your taste buds
- cause periodontal disease
- stain your teeth
- cause more calculus to build up on your teeth
- dry your skin
- cause premature wrinkling of the skin

In addition to these wonderful benefits of smoking, there's also increased risk of several serious diseases, including:

- oral cancer
- bladder cancer
- lung cancer
- emphysema
- heart disease
- stroke

Smokeless tobacco and cigars cause many of the same effects as cigarettes. Giving up smoking and/or chewing tobacco can only benefit your health. Why not take steps now to find out how to lose this habit for life?

CIGARETTES AND TOOTH LOSS

Think there's no connection? Think again. *If you began smoking at the age of 18 and kept up a pack-a-day habit through the age of 35, you could lose as many as four teeth. Research has shown that smoking is linked to a loss of nearly three teeth for every ten years of smoking for men and between one and two teeth in that same time period for women.*



Beth D. Vander Schaaf, D.D.S.
Douglas O. Beischel, D.D.S.
7301 E. Thomas Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Patient Hours

Monday-Thursday
7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Appointment and Emergency

Phone: (480) 994-5225
e-mail: 123@2dentists4u.com
Web site: www.2dentists4u.com



"Did you know that each president's mouth at Mt. Rushmore is 18 feet across? That means the toothbrushes they'd need to clean their teeth would be 50 feet long!"