

# The New Dental Times

Produced for the patients of:  
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and  
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## Osteoporosis and your mouth

Osteoporosis is often thought of as a disease that affects the spine and bone structure, but research has shown that osteoporosis can also affect the jaw and teeth.

Osteoporosis occurs when there is a breakdown in the normal bone regeneration process. Our bones are constantly being broken down and then reformed. When osteoporosis is present, however, bone formation cannot keep pace. Subsequently, bones lose density and become brittle.

In a recent study, nearly half of the women suffering from osteoporosis had their own teeth at age 50, but needed dentures by age 60.

While some new drugs are holding out hope for successfully treating osteoporosis, prevention is still the best way to battle it. Two keys to prevention are eating enough calcium-rich foods and engaging in regular weight-bearing exercise. We recommend that you take advantage of both these preventive measures to help keep your teeth, jaw, and all your bones in shape.

## Getting the maximum dental benefits

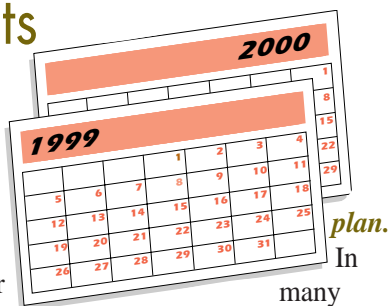
Many patients don't get maximum use of their dental benefits because they don't take advantage of what their plans offer. Others aren't clear on exactly what their benefits are or how their coverage works.

Many plans cover preventive care, like cleanings and x-rays. Their aim is to reduce costs by encouraging dental wellness. To understand how your benefits work and what they cover, there are a few key words and phrases you should learn:

■ **A deductible is the amount you have to pay out each year before your insurance coverage kicks in.** Some plans have an individual deductible, while others have a family deductible.

■ **A copayment may apply—whether you have indemnity insurance or a managed care plan.** This is the amount that you should pay out-of-pocket before leaving our office. For some plans, this amount is 20 to 50 percent of the bill. For managed care plans, it may be a fixed dollar amount per visit.

■ **Coordination of benefits applies when you are covered by more than one insurance**



In many cases, the primary plan will pay 80 percent, and the second plan will cover the 20 percent copayment.

■ **The maximum is a total amount of benefit dollars that your plan will pay out in a year.**

Insurance plans are complicated, and they don't show signs of becoming any easier to understand. Since legal definitions may vary from carrier to carrier, the ones we just mentioned are offered simply as a guideline. To learn more about how your individual benefits work, talk to your personnel director or call your insurance company. We'll be happy to help as well. Call us before your next appointment and schedule a time to discuss your plan. Then, bring along your benefits book, and we'll do our best to answer questions or help make things clearer for you.

We strive to provide the best in patient satisfaction.

## Plaque—in your mouth and your arteries

**O**ver 35 million Americans suffer from periodontal disease, and heart disease is the number one killer in this country. While the link between these two diseases is becoming clearer, the potential for lowering the risk of heart attack also becomes more obvious.

Periodontal disease is caused by bacteria that live in the plaque on your teeth. For some time now, researchers knew that patients with periodontal disease were twice as likely to also suffer from heart disease, but they didn't know why. New research has provided evidence of a clear and convincing reason.

It seems that porphyromanas gingivalis—the bacteria that cause gum disease—cause platelets in the blood stream to clump together, raising the risk of heart attack. The study that discovered this used bacteria samples from patients' mouths and then introduced them to human blood platelets. Other studies have shown that when these bacteria are

injected into the bloodstream, clotting occurs almost immediately.

Plaque buildup in arteries can lead to stroke, as well as heart attack. Furthermore, periodontal disease and the bacteria which cause it have been linked to another heart disease known as infective endocarditis, which cause inflammation around the heart. Other problems that may be related to bacterial plaque include a weak immune system, premature babies and babies with low birth weights, and lung diseases.

Of course, flossing just once a day is still the best way to battle dental plaque. If traditional floss is difficult for you to use, floss threaders and other manual implements are available to help. There are also many electronic systems that can aid in plaque removal. Regular professional cleanings can remove plaque you've missed and improve your chances of healthy gums. And, it appears that healthy gums can also mean a healthier

heart.

For years, we've been instructing patients to brush regularly and well, and telling them to floss daily. Our aim was to save teeth, but we're glad to know we may have been helping to save lives in the process.



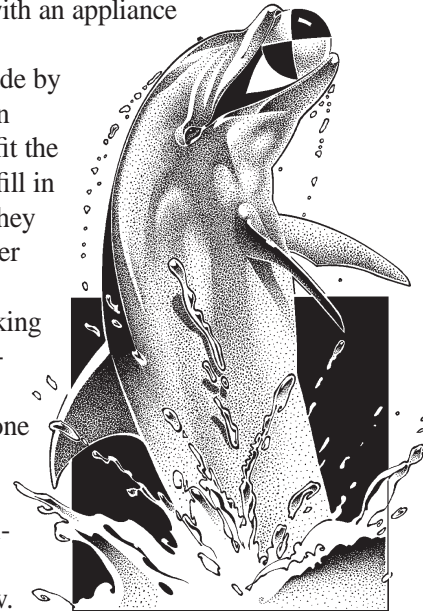
## TV teeth & the "flipper"

**“H**ey, all you kids out in television land, what do you do when you lose a tooth?” For most kids, losing a tooth means putting it under their pillow and waiting for the tooth fairy. But, for children who are involved in modeling or acting projects, a lost tooth means a trip to the dentist.

A missing tooth could mean missing out on a part in a show, commercial, or modeling job. Many dentists are equipped to take care of this problem with an appliance known as a “flipper.”

A flipper is generally made by taking impressions and then producing an appliance to fit the gap. A false tooth or teeth fill in for the missing ones until they begin to grow in. The flipper slides in and out easily and doesn't interfere with speaking or smiling, nor is it uncomfortable for the child.

So, if you ever hear anyone speaking of a “Hollywood Flipper,” they probably are talking about a dental appliance rather than a dolphin from a '60s television show.



## How well do you brush?

**A** new study has revealed that the type of brush you use probably has much less to do with how effectively you clean your teeth than how well you brush. In other words, if your brushing technique isn't adequate, brush design isn't going to make any difference in your oral hygiene.

The study involved 25 dental hygiene students with healthy teeth and gums. All the students went 24 hours without brushing before the study. The students then brushed with one of three toothbrushes specially designed for plaque removal. The amount of plaque on their teeth was measured before and after brushing. Since all the brushes performed similarly, the evaluators concluded that the brushes the students used made little difference. Rather, they surmised, it was the brushing technique that significantly reduced plaque on the teeth and gums.

Of course, it's important for you to use a brush you feel comfortable with—one that fits well in your hand and makes your mouth feel clean. Once you've got a brush you're happy with, make sure your brushing technique is up to par. Check out “Better brushing tips” on this page, and if you have any questions, ask us. We'll be happy to help you practice a technique that will keep your teeth and gums in tip-top shape.

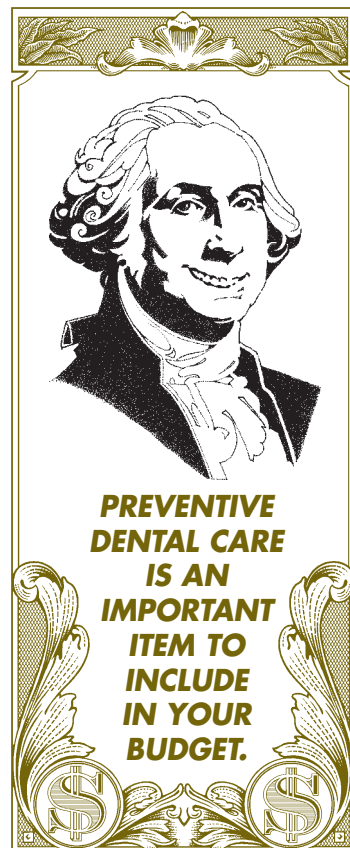


### BETTER BRUSHING TIPS

Choose a soft-bristled brush that feels good in your hand, and hold it at a 45-degree angle to your teeth. Allow the tips of the bristles to slide partway under the gumline. Don't scrub. Rather, use quick, elliptical strokes; concentrate on cleaning two teeth at a time.

To clean inside surfaces, hold the brush vertically. Be sure to cover inside, outside, and biting surfaces. Don't squash the bristles against your teeth, since it's the tips of the bristles that are most effective in cleaning tooth surfaces. Take your time. Adequate brushing cannot be accomplished if you're in a hurry. Rinse well when you're finished to remove food particles and plaque that you loosened during brushing.

## Prevention is still a bargain



**W**hether or not you have dental insurance, preventive dentistry is still a bargain. The yearly costs of cleanings, exams, and x-rays are minimal compared to the costs of going without them. Restorative work on neglected teeth can be expensive when severe damage has been done.

Many patients who don't have dental insurance forego getting the regular treatment they need. Inside their mouths, however, the battle rages on. Plaque builds up, bacteria thrive, and eventually cavities and periodontal disease wreak havoc. By the time many patients reach us, they're in significant pain, and extensive work is needed to save their teeth.

Consider the other expenses in your life. If you can afford cable TV or a monthly trip to the

hairdresser, you can probably afford preventive dental care. In fact, the money you invest in preventive care is similar to dental insurance, because it helps you avoid costlier work down the road. The amount you would pay each year is minimal when compared to the cost of root canal work and a crown to completely restore the tooth.

We think that you'll agree that preventive dental care is an important item to include in your budget. Remember, the bacteria that attack your teeth don't know or care whether you have dental insurance. Without regular cleanings, they'll simply continue to populate the tartar on your teeth until they've caused major damage. With a little regular help from us now, you can avoid needing a lot of help later on.



## What does that ADA Seal really mean?

**T**he ADA Seal of Acceptance is a well-known part of the advertising and promotion of dental products. But many patients wonder what the Seal really means. Here's a synopsis of what the ADA Seal program is all about.

First, the program is completely voluntary. A dental manufacturer chooses whether or not to submit a product for evaluation. Review of these products is done by the ADA, along with independent consultants. Requirements are stringent, and up to 40 percent of products do not meet safety and efficiency standards the first time they're submitted. Often, products are adjusted and resubmitted for a second review.

Once a product receives the Seal, the promotional claims for that product are continually scrutinized. If the advertising can't be supported by clinical data, then it's not allowed. Questions about products containing the ADA Seal should be addressed to the manufacturer. Generally, a phone number is available on the product or its packaging for this purpose.

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## Everyone's teeth...

...**yellow with age**. It's a simple fact. It may start when you're a child with medications that affect the enamel. As you grow up, things you eat and drink (like wine, coffee, cola, and tea) or other factors (like smoking) cause buildup on your teeth. As you begin to age, the enamel thins and the dentin behind it becomes more opaque. All this contributes to a yellowish look to your teeth.

Fortunately, there are many ways to whiten teeth that are stained and yellowed with age. One option is bleaching, either in our office or using a kit (which we will recommend) that you take home with you. Bonding and porcelain veneers are other ways to remedy discolored teeth.

Whatever the cause of your yellowed teeth, they don't have to stay that way. If you've got a change in mind, ask us about the ways to make it happen.

## It only takes a pinch

**I**t's called "chew," "dip," or "snuff." No matter what you call it, many healthcare professionals believe it to be a "deadly" habit. Smokeless, or chewing, tobacco has been implicated in the development of precancerous oral lesions and oral cancer. The worst part of this scenario is that oral cancer has a very low five-year survival rate and often results in pain, functional difficulties, and oral disfigurement.

One of the most crucial developments in oral cancer research is the phenomenon that many oral cancer patients used snuff for only a short period of time. Often, the most serious cases are in patients who used it for less than a year.

When using a product can mean you're six times more likely than a non-user to develop a deadly disease, the best course of action is to avoid that product. However, for those who are hooked, there are smokeless tobacco cessation programs available.

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