

*Dr. Thomas'*

# TOOTH TALK

Produced for the Patients of Drs. James Thomas & Paul Chappel

Summer 2003

## FROM THE **DENTISTS**

### Exciting New Technology

On your next visit, you will notice some new high-tech equipment, which we are very excited about!

We have added new intra-oral cameras employing the latest technology to visualize your teeth. We can now take you on a visual tour of your mouth, and record high quality digital photographs as a part of your electronic patient record. The images are displayed for you on high quality flat screen computer monitors (see related article on back page).

We have also completely changed the way we process and store X-ray images using a state-of-the-art digital X-ray system. Your X-rays are taken in the manner you are used to, using a digital sensor in place of the film. The sensors are scanned into electronic form. Your X-ray images are viewed on our computer monitors and become a part of your electronic record. The large display enables us to easily point out areas we wish to highlight. Another important benefit...for most views we only use 50% of the radiation.

We're excited about this new way to communicate with you about your dental needs and desires!

— Dr. James Thomas  
& Dr. Paul Chappel

## Exploring Your Options For A Beautiful Smile

*Is it worth the effort to improve my smile? Can an attractive smile really make a difference in peoples' lives?* Those are two common and legitimate questions we're often asked when a patient is considering dentistry to improve their smile: *Can it make a difference?* All indications are that it can. *Is it worth the effort?* For most people, absolutely.

In a nationwide survey conducted to study that exact question, here is what North Americans perceive and believe to be true:

- 92% accept that a smile is an important social asset;
- 87% acknowledge that they always remember someone with an especially attractive smile;
- 85% said that an unattractive smile makes a person of the opposite sex less appealing, and;
- 74% accept that an unattractive smile hurts a person's chances for career success.

It seems quite clear that your smile can, in fact, have a very positive (or

negative) impact on your life ... socially, romantically, and in your career. A beautiful smile makes you memorable and adds to your opportunities, while a not-so-beautiful smile does not.

In his book, *Changing Your Smile*, Dr. Ronald Goldstein may have said it best...

"A compelling smile illuminates your face and quietly says, 'I care about myself. I like who I am...'. It can open doors and knock down barriers that stand between you and a fuller life."

So, should you make the effort to improve your smile? Only you can answer that question ... but here's what we would recommend. If you're not completely happy with your smile, if you would like your smile to be more attractive and memorable, then expend the effort to explore your options. Please feel free to ask us questions about what's involved to make your smile "compelling." We always welcome your call.



*Cutting edge dentistry - one more way we can provide excellent service!*

**It has been established that hormones can affect your oral health, triggering dental problems that require special care. That's why your home hygiene regimen and dental visits are so important.**

No matter what you hear, it's *not* a mistake to visit the dentist while you're pregnant! Sometimes vigilance about exposure to x-rays is confused with a need to avoid the dentist. Often we suggest additional professional cleanings during pregnancy since gingivitis is common as gums are more susceptible to bacteria. Most pregnancy-related oral problems are preventable or controlled with good oral hygiene.

After your baby arrives, an increase in progesterone can cause gums to bleed when brushing or flossing. If you have *new mom gums*, be careful about bacterial infection.

*Oral contraceptives* can intensify existing oral problems, encourage gingivitis, or reduce saliva flow. Standard cleaning should prevent or solve most problems.

New research suggests a link between female hormones during childbearing years and *Temporomandibular (jaw) Joint Disorder*. (See *Women And Temporomandibular Joint Disorder* below.)

Hormonal imbalances during menopause may cause dry mouth, jaw pain, or a burning sensation in your mouth. Treatments range from oral lubricants to hormone replacement therapy.

No matter what your stage in life, we want to keep you well. We welcome questions about hormones and their effects on oral health.

## Clean Your Tongue!

You know you should brush and floss regularly to protect your teeth and gums, and to help battle bad breath. But don't stop there! Your tongue can contribute to bad breath and trap harmful germs, even after brushing, flossing, and rinsing.

You can clean your tongue with a toothbrush. Rinse your brush with warm water, and brush from back to front. A teaspoon is also effective. Rinse a spoon under warm water then stick out your tongue, and place the spoon at the back of your tongue with the open side down. Drag it forward to the front tip. There are also a variety of affordable tongue-cleaning aids available at your pharmacy. They work on the same principle as the spoon method, but have been designed specifically for the task. You can clean your tongue as often as you brush, but remember to be very gentle.

## Women And Temporomandibular Joint Disorder

If you are one of the millions of North Americans who suffers from tenderness in the jaw muscles, limited jaw opening, jaws that get stuck, unexplained facial or head pain, jaw joint grating or clicking, you may have a condition called *Temporomandibular Joint Disorder* or TMD.

Treating TMD has long been a challenge, and there's no simple

prescription, but recent research seems to confirm that women are particularly susceptible and that there is a hormonal link. According to some studies, 90% of patients seeking relief for the problem are women of childbearing age. It has been observed that women's lower jaws tend to be smaller which may contribute to headaches and other forms of pain.

Here are some tips for both women and men who experience a sore jaw joint. If the soreness continues, or if you have any of the symptoms we have outlined, please call us for a consultation.

Don't	Do
...chew gum for a while.	...yawn carefully. Flaring your nostrils is better for your jaw than opening your mouth.
...open your mouth any wider than an inch or so. Eat smaller-sized pieces of food.	...sleep on your back, rather than your side, and don't support your face on your arms or fists.
...chew caramels, firm bread crusts, nuts, raw vegetables, or leathery meats.	...avoid stress. When you can't, avoid jaw clenching by holding your teeth apart while your lips are together.
...chew ice cubes.	...try ASA to reduce inflammation. (Ibuprofen can also help).
...jut out your lower jaw to apply lipstick or lip balm.	



# Invest In Yourself!

If you look good, you feel good. If you feel good, you *do* good. You've heard it a million times before, but have you ever really listened? Like many old-fashioned recipes for success, this simple adage has the ring of truth. That's why many people are investing time and money in themselves – to become more fit, more aware, more attractive.

Even if your lifestyle won't allow you to hit the gym on a regular basis, you can still hit the ground running in your head start to look and feel better. Teeth whitening takes only a minimal investment of your time, and the rewards are well worth it. Today's modern teeth whitening techniques are safe and effective when undertaken in the professional environment of our dental office.

Life's little lapses like tea, coffee, smoking, or red wine can gradually leave surface stains that are easy to remove. Just getting older or inheriting a darker tooth color can also dim your smile. Some smiles have lost their sparkle due to root canal treatments, fluorosis, or tetracycline use.

Teeth whitening is fast becoming the first therapy of choice for millions of people just like you. For a brighter whiter smile, please give us a call. There's nothing old-fashioned about it.

# flossing

## The Three-Minute Daily Commitment

We all know that we need to brush, floss, and rinse. Even so, most of us only brush about one-third of the recommended time, and most of us treat flossing as something that we don't have time for. Flossing removes plaque and bacteria from between teeth and below the gumline where your toothbrush just can't go, thereby

preventing periodontal disease, a serious threat to your oral health.

A survey indicates that ¾ of respondents eat twice or more a day at work. Interestingly, only 14% cleaned their teeth there – in spite of the fact that 90% thought that a healthy smile was important to a person's appearance.

Make flossing a daily habit by flossing after lunch – a good way to establish a routine. Choose a floss that works best for you – thick or thin, flavored or unflavored, waxed or unwaxed. Just get it done every day!

STEP



by

STEP



Take about eighteen inches of floss and wrap it securely around your middle fingers – without cutting off your circulation, please!

Hold your index finger firmly, and leave about half an inch length of floss between them.

Then gently ease the floss between your teeth. Be sure to press tightly against each side of each tooth, forming a C shape.

Ease the floss up and down several times, and go *below* the gumline where all the bacterial action is.

When you hear a little squeak, you'll know the plaque is gone.

# Prepare For The Unexpected

Dental emergencies can be upsetting, so it's important to prepare an action plan just in case. The most common types of emergencies involve severe toothache, a chipped or broken tooth, or a knocked out tooth.

First, try to remain calm. In all dental emergencies, it is crucial that the injured person is treated as quickly as possible. Take the patient to the dental office or hospital for an evaluation of the extent of the injury, and to make necessary repairs quickly and safely.

How can you prepare in advance for when the unexpected happens? You can pack an emergency dental care kit that includes:

Emergency phone numbers

Saline solution and small container with lid to transport a knocked out tooth

Handkerchief or tea towel

Gauze

Dental cement compounds to temporarily replace a filling

Orthodontic wax to protect soft tissues from sharp edges, particularly on braces

pair of tweezers

sterile cotton small mirror

# Ibuprofen

(not ASA which is an anti-coagulant, which may cause excessive bleeding in a dental emergency)



# A Picture Worth A Thousand Words

## Interactive technology in the dental office

One of the toughest jobs for a dentist is explaining that you need treatment to fix or prevent problems you can't see or feel. Dental researchers have finally come up with a simple solution ... seeing is believing! A tiny digital camera now makes it possible for you to see exactly what we are

*Come on in and give  
that smile a screen test*

talking about. A hand-held camera the size of a pen captures problems such as a cavity or a fractured filling up close. The color pictures are instantly displayed on a chairside computer monitor so you can see what's going on with your teeth and gums - magnified up to fifty-two times. You

can even look at those hard-to-reach spots on the gumline where you may not be brushing or flossing enough.

Dental digital imaging isn't just a neat little techno-gimmick. When you see and understand what's going on in your mouth firsthand, we can make better treatment decisions. Visual records are a great asset for analysis, record keeping and for explaining long-term treatment plans to your dental insurance company. But the most exciting benefit is that the intra-oral camera can highlight more than just problems.



Using a special imaging computer, we can show you exactly what cosmetic and restorative options can do for your smile - in living color. So come on in and give that smile a screen test!

## OFFICE INFORMATION

**James D. Thomas, DDS**

**R. Paul Chappel, DDS**

6240 Hill Street  
Cass City, MI 48726

### Office Hours

Monday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Tuesday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Wednesday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Thursday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Friday 7:00 am - 4:00 pm

*Other hours available on request*

### Contact Information

Office (989) 872-3870  
Fax (989) 872-4582  
Emergency (989) 872-5518  
Email drthomas@asmileforlife.com  
Web site www.asmileforlife.com

### Office Staff

Denise, Sheri, Kris ..... Receptionists  
Timothy ..... Office Manager  
Chris, Susie, Heather, Amanda, Jamie  
..... Clinical Assistants  
Carol, Kim, Tanya, Jami .....  
..... Dental Hygienists

**Brush • Floss • Smile**

DISCOVER



## Is It Time For An Appointment?

We schedule your checkups based on what keeps your smile at its best. We need to see you often enough to diagnose and treat any problems and to take preventive action - usually once every three to six months.

If you brush and floss regularly and you don't have any tooth troubles, you may be tempted to bypass your next appointment. Please don't! The reason is simple - only a dentist is trained to spot potential problems and provide the right treatment.

*If you think you need a  
checkup, call us*

A regular checkup includes a screening for unusual or small problems that might become big ones! This covers the early warning signs for gum disease, infections, faulty restorations, and oral cancer. We'll also do a thorough cleaning, remove tartar buildup, and answer any questions you may have.

If you think you need a checkup, call us! We'll be happy to let you know if you're overdue. Remember ... regular dental appointments are a good long-term investment in your health.

## Hygienists: Your Best Ally

If you take good care of your teeth, you'll probably spend less time in our office getting fillings and more time with our hygienist. It's important you realize that you are actually getting a lot more than just a cleaning.

Oral hygiene appointments routinely include diagnostic services. This means examination of your teeth to find decay, cavity-detecting radiographs, and an assessment of your gum tissue.

Your oral hygiene checkup can also involve a number of preventive services. This could mean screening for oral cancer, and applying fluoride. The hygienist also cleans and scales teeth to remove plaque, tartar and surface stains, and polishes fillings and crowns.

And that's not all. A hygiene visit often includes educational services such as brushing and flossing instruction, and explanations of dental treatments.

So there's no such thing as just a cleaning. Hygiene services begin in our office, but they must always be followed by proper brushing, flossing and healthy eating at home.

