

# TOOTH TALK

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

Winter 2003

## FROM THE DENTISTS

### New Year's Resolutions *How about a new smile for 2003?*

The start of a new year is always buzzing with promises to make positive changes and pledges to drop bad habits. Weight loss, quitting smoking, exercise, and better eating – these are often among the top New Year's resolutions. We'd like to suggest a resolution that's guaranteed to put a smile on your face. Paying attention to how and what you eat, proper brushing, and taking advantage of cosmetic dental services are all ways to give yourself a brighter, whiter, and happier smile.

A healthy attractive smile can do as much for your sense of self-esteem as any resolution. The best part is that you don't have to do it all by yourself. We can show you how to eat and brush better by choosing healthy foods and using fluoride and soft bristles. Talk to us about it at your next appointment, or if you prefer, call us to set up something sooner.

We can also introduce you to some of the cosmetic dental services that can whiten dull teeth, fix gaps, chips, and crooked teeth, and give you the smile you've always dreamed of. Resolving to improve your teeth is a lot easier than many resolutions, and the benefits will give you a reason to smile and feel good for years to come.

## Children's Dental Health Month

In February, for over sixty years, dentists, parents, and children all across America observe *National Children's Dental Health Month*. This all began as a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio on February 3rd, 1941, and the first national observance of Children's Dental Health Day was held on February 8th, 1949. It has since grown into a month-long celebration. Our message of the importance of oral health goes out to millions of children and adults in communities across the country, and includes such events as health fairs, dental office tours, and visits to the classroom by dentists and hygienists.

One of the reasons for this special annual event is that many people are still unaware of the important role early dental care plays in our children's overall health. We strongly recommend that parents take action early to ensure the health of their children's teeth because attitudes and habits established at an early age are



critical in maintaining good oral health throughout life.

Please make sure we see your child within six months of the eruption of the first tooth, and certainly no later than the child's first birthday. Preventive care such as cleanings and fluoride treatments provide your child with "smile insurance" for a lifetime!

If you wish any further information on any aspect of your child's dental and oral health, please call us. We'd be happy to help in any way we can!

## Winter Tooth Tips

- Go for brushes with soft nylon bristles and a flat surface.
- Replace your brush about every three months.
- Use a mouthguard if you play contact sports.
- Choose healthy foods like cheese and crunchy vegetables.
- Never use your teeth to open things.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste.
- Don't smoke – and remember that coffee, tea, colas, and soya sauce can stain your teeth.
- If you can't brush after every meal, try chewing on a piece of sugarless gum or biting into a carrot or apple.
- Floss every day.
- See your dentist regularly!

*Don't forget your oral health care in your new years resolutions!*

# The Silent Disease

What is the number-one threat to your oral health? What is the number-one reason for early, unnecessary tooth loss? According to a recent national survey of dentists, periodontal (gum) disease easily wins the big prize. And what's worse, as the President of the American Dental Association recently put it, "It's entirely possible to have gum disease and not even know it... especially in the early stages. Perhaps this is why more than half of dentists surveyed also cite periodontal disease as the one area their patients are not sufficiently concerned about, despite the fact that there is growing evidence of links between the disease and other serious health conditions."

Gum disease will affect 75% of North American adults at some time in their lives. In its early stages when treatment is simplest and most effective, it can easily go unnoticed. This silent disease is caused by bacterial plaque, a sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on the teeth and gums. If the plaque isn't removed daily by brushing and flossing, it releases poisons which cause the breakdown of the fibers that hold your gums tightly to your teeth, which in turn creates pockets between your teeth and gums. These pockets then fill up with even more bacteria and toxins which further weaken the gum tissue and eventually

the bone. But until the disease reaches an advanced stage, it is often painless ... silent, but dangerous.

The earliest form of the disease is called gingivitis, which often affects teenagers. Two early symptoms are gums that bleed when brushed or flossed, and gums that are bright red and swollen instead of pink.

Periodontal disease can often be reversed, or at least kept effectively in check. But early diagnoses and a rigorous regimen of professional and home care are essential for success. Together we can win, so please make sure you have regular checkups and pay special attention to the state of your gums, even if you're symptom free.

## How Do I Know?

Periodontal (gum) disease sneaks up on you. It can develop slowly, with few – if any – warning signs. Here are a few symptoms that will help you to identify the disease in its early stages.

**Gums that bleed, even slightly, when you brush or floss your teeth.**

**Persistent bad breath, or a constant bad taste in your mouth.**

**Swollen or tender gums, or gums that appear redder than usual.**

**Gums that appear to have pulled away or are receding from your teeth.**

**Teeth that are loose, or seem to be changing position.**



**Healthy Gums:** Healthy gums are firm and fill the spaces between teeth. They form a collar-like rim around the teeth and have little dot-like indentations called stippling. The stippled areas look like the skin of a navel orange. Healthy gums are odorless and do not bleed when you brush or eat.



**Gingivitis:** An early form of periodontal disease, gingivitis occurs when plaque forms and adheres to the tooth surface near the gums. Gums become inflamed, resulting in redness and puffiness, and they bleed when brushed or flossed. Bad breath is often present.

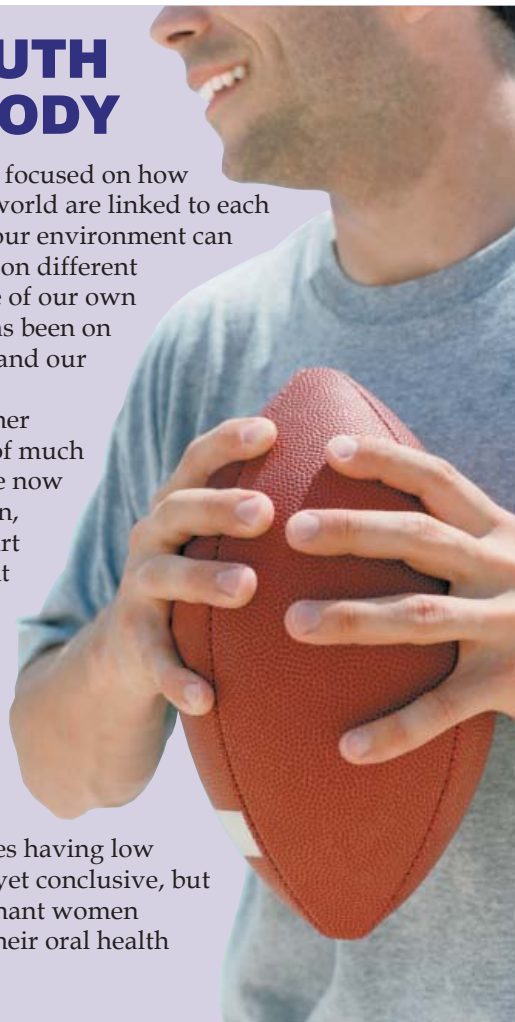


**Periodontitis:** When the infection spreads from the gum to the underlying bone, gingivitis becomes periodontitis. In this stage, the bone that supports the teeth is lost. Gums detach from the tooth forming pockets, allowing more bacterial activity. If left untreated, tooth loss can occur.

## HEALTHY MOUTH = HEALTHY BODY

Scientific research has recently focused on how so many elements of our natural world are linked to each other; how change in one part of our environment can have a huge effect on other areas, on different plants or species. The same is true of our own bodies. A major scientific focus has been on the links between our oral health and our general health. The link between periodontal (gum) disease and other medical conditions is the subject of much research and debate. The evidence now strongly supports the link between, for example, gum disease and heart disease. Bacteria and toxins present in infected gums can enter the blood stream and travel throughout the body. The way this happens is not yet precisely known, although brushing or even chewing food may be the cause.

The bacteria produced by gum disease is also suspected to be a factor in pre-term births and babies having low birth weight. The evidence is not yet conclusive, but it's sufficient to suggest that pregnant women should take extra special care of their oral health throughout their pregnancy.



## KICKING The Habit

We all know the devastating effects smoking or chewing tobacco has on our oral and general health. Quitting isn't easy, but the scientific evidence of just how profound and far-reaching the benefits are of a nicotine-free body continues to pile up.

Dentists have known for years that smoking is a serious contributor to periodontal (gum) disease which affects literally millions of North Americans. The heat and tobacco chemicals irritate sensitive tissue inside the mouth, killing cells, leading to chronic gum disease. And a recent study conducted at the State University of New York's School of Dentistry has concluded that smokers do not heal as well as non-smokers or ex-smokers following periodontal treatment.

The good news is that the effectiveness and recovery time of the treatment is improved significantly even if the patient has stopped smoking a short time before treatment.

Please give your gums a chance! Make your body a smoke-free zone, and it will thank you forever.

## What You Can Do

Regular professional teeth cleaning by your dentist or hygienist is an essential part of gum disease prevention and treatment. But your periodontal health must begin with you, at your home and at your workplace. Here are some tips on what you can do to keep your gums healthy and disease-free.

> Floss your teeth carefully and thoroughly at least once a day.

> Regularly examine your mouth for signs of gum disease.

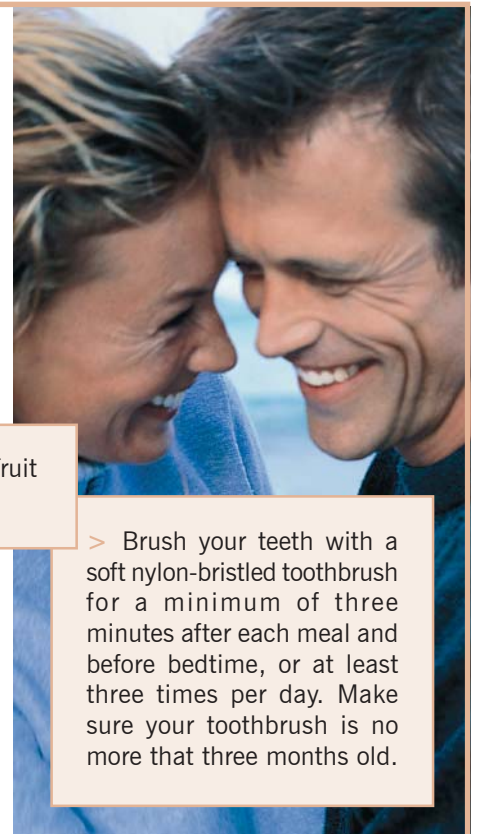
> If brushing is impossible after a meal, at least thoroughly rinse your mouth with warm water and chew a piece of sugarless gum.

> Avoid sweet, sticky snacks. Fruit and crunchy veggies are best!

> Eat well-balanced meals which include a variety of nutrients from all food groups.

> Avoid all tobacco products, and avoid excessive alcohol consumption.

> Brush your teeth with a soft nylon-bristled toothbrush for a minimum of three minutes after each meal and before bedtime, or at least three times per day. Make sure your toothbrush is no more than three months old.



# Stressed Out?

## Your gums tell all!

We all have stress in our lives: the freeway in the morning, the job, the mortgage, the boss, the brother-in-law, the neighbor's dog, the headlines, the weather, the teenagers... Most of us cope pretty well with these problems,

*Medical researchers have known for years that stress is a key negative factor in our overall health*

and we also like to keep them pretty much private. But don't try to hide serious stress from your dentist: your gums may tell all!

Medical researchers have known for years that stress is a key negative

factor in our overall health. And studies now show these marital, family, or financial problems can have a direct effect on our oral and dental health. So if you're in the midst of one of life's serious or sad events, be prepared for some significant dental health effects. For many patients, the progression and severity of periodontal (gum) disease is greatly influenced by their high level of emotional stress. In addition, when we're under great stress, we tend to compromise our regimen of home oral care.



If you are experiencing one of these difficult times of life, please make sure to keep up your oral care, and have your dental health evaluated by us as soon as possible.

## OFFICE INFORMATION

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### Office Hours

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### Office Staff

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

*Brush • Floss • Smile*

DISCOVER



## Fight That Cold Time to change your brush

A new study has shown that bacteria on a toothbrush can aggravate your illness. We recommend our patients change their toothbrushes every three months, or with the seasons. But it may be a good idea to do that sooner if you've recently had an infection such as sinusitis, pneumonia, or upset stomach. The study demonstrated that bacteria from your illness can stay on the toothbrush, and remain there for up to a month. That could extend your recovery time.

When purchasing your replacement, make sure to buy a soft-bristled toothbrush with round-ended bristles which are easier on your enamel and gums. Hard, worn, or frayed bristles can actually damage your gum tissue. Or consider buying a powered toothbrush. They're more effective at removing plaque, and are ideal for people with arthritis or other health conditions.

We already know that regularly replacing your toothbrush is good for the health of your teeth and gums, so fighting infection is just one more reason to invest in a new toothbrush!

## Why Does The Dentist Need My Medical Information?

New scientific research proves that your oral health is an essential component of your overall health. This is why we need to know your general medical history in order to provide you with the best care possible.

Some patients wonder why we collect this information in the first place, and further, why we sometimes ask for a medical update at every recall appointment. Firstly, your general medical condition, and your personal nutritional and lifestyle habits give us valuable clues to understanding your dental health. Secondly, we now know that your dental health has a direct impact on a wide-ranging variety of medical conditions from diabetes to heart and stroke disease, to osteoporosis and even some stress-related conditions. We're also on the front line when it comes to early diagnoses of a wide range of oral cancers.

If you have any questions about this, or have any other concern about the links between your dental and overall medical condition, please don't hesitate to ask us.

