The patient newsletter of Drs. Chiaravalli, Figenshau, Fahrenbach, and Johnson

Mountain Don’t
What do you reach for when you’re thirsty? If you said a pop, you’re not alone. The average American drinks 1.5 cans of soda a day. This puts you and your children at a greater risk for developing cavities. It not only leads to dental problems, but medical problems as well. A high daily intake of soda can cause obesity, osteoporosis, heart disease and kidney stones.

Tooth decay is the leading chronic childhood disease. A child is five times more likely to suffer from dental decay than asthma. By first grade 50% of children have had a cavity. Tooth pain and oral health problems cause children to miss 3 million school hours each year. Of the nineteen year olds in this country, only two percent meet the standard for a healthy diet. Next time you’re thirsty, reach for a glass of milk, your body will thank you.

Teenage Victims of Osteoporosis
There are a growing number of nutritionists who think that Americans are not getting enough calcium. They believe that the problem starts in childhood when kids start drinking colas or “fruit juices”. The bones are forming in children and adolescents. The bones no longer grow in length in the twenties but continue to grow more dense until the age of thirty or thirty-five. At that time bone mass is lost, a process that accelerates as people grow older. In some cases osteoporosis develops, making a person more prone to broken bones and a loss in height as the backbone compresses. Children need to develop good eating habits at an early age. Calcium rich foods are far better than calcium supplements because food has other nutrients as well. Those who are lactose intolerant can buy lactose free milk and try eating cheese and yogurt. They may also be able to start with small servings of milk and work up.

How can I avoid getting cavities?
• Avoid sipping pop throughout the day. Rather, enjoy sodas in a short time with food or as a part of a meal.
• Drink pop in moderation. Even diet drinks contain acid that will attack the teeth and result in decay.
• If you can’t brush, rinse your mouth with water after drinking a pop.
• Never drink pop or juice before bedtime, or put them in a baby’s bottle, because the liquid pools in the mouth and coats your teeth with sugar and acid that can result in decay.
• Drink water instead of pop since it has no sugar, no acid and no calories.
• Brush and floss regularly to remove the plaque that can lead to tooth decay.
Why Clean Your Tongue

There has been a strong emphasis on cleaning plaque from teeth in recent years but surprisingly there has not been much said about the tongue. The tongue is coated with millions of bacteria. The soft foods that most of us eat do not significantly clean the tongue, leaving a layer of debris and bacteria. Odors are produced during the putrification process which is directly related to bad breath. Bacteria on the tongue contribute to tooth decay and halitosis. Tongue cleaning should be a routine procedure.

In recent years, many devices have been made available to simplify the process. They range from circular devices with handles to scrape the tongue surface to strap-like pieces of plastic or metal.

How Do I Clean My Tongue?

1. Stick out your tongue as far as possible.
2. Place the tongue cleaner as far back on your tongue as you can, using the scraper to flatten your tongue.
3. Pull the scraper toward the front of the tongue slowly.
4. Rinse the device under running water.
5. Repeat until debris can no longer be removed.
6. Clean and dry the device.

Sign on the Bottom Line:

The government (HIPPA - Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act) wants you to sign a form (you may refuse) saying we have informed you of our privacy rules. Be assured we do not let anyone have your health information unless you say its O.K. The only times we do release information is when we bill your insurance, when we refer to a specialist, or when you transfer to another dental office. In all cases we release the absolute minimum information.

Missing Sleep Can Hurt You

A full nights sleep will improve your memory and learning. Researchers have long said that sleep makes people more alert, productive and improves the mood. People need seven to nine hours of sleep nightly, yet most people are getting less than seven. A sleep deficit is similar to some of the effects of aging. This suggests that a loss of sleep may make age-related diseases like obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure more severe. This adds to the mounting evidence on the benefits of sleep. A sleep deficit develops when you get less sleep than the body needs. It will accumulate over time and affect motor and intellectual functions. People will try to catch up on lost sleep during weekends, but that only makes a small dent in the large sleep debt. To function at your optimum level, get enough sleep every night.

Sensitive Teeth

Teeth sensitive to cold are a common and often perplexing problem. Tooth decay, gum recession and large fillings are frequently to blame. Another often overlooked cause is tooth brushing style. The teeth most sensitive are often those teeth where you habitually start brushing. You load your brush up with paste, much like on TV commercials, and then slap those stiff, toothpaste laden bristles on the same teeth day after day. These very same teeth are often the ones that bother you most when you drink cold water. Try instead to place a very small amount of paste on your brush and lather up on the biting surfaces of the teeth. This method accomplishes several things. The small amount of paste reduces the abrasive you spread on the delicate root surfaces, the part of your tooth sensitive to cold. By lathering up on the hard biting part of the tooth, you disperse ingredients in the paste that can aggravate gum recession. You also soften the bristles of the brush. After you start on the tops of the teeth then proceed normally. Remember to use a circular scrub.

Gum Disease is Sneaky

One day you think you’re fine and the next your teeth are loose. What happened? You probably ignored the years of mild symptoms which preceded the loose teeth. These symptoms include bad breath, bleeding gums or a pink tooth brush. You probably also ignored some words of advice from us. Whenever we suggest you see a periodontist or shorten the interval between cleaning or anesthetize a certain area to deeply curette under the gum, we are doing this to reduce the chances of you losing your teeth to gum disease.

Most gum disease is treatable. The treatment can either be done here or by a specialist (periodontist) depending on the severity of the case. The treatment is corrective in the sense that once treated it will return if the conditions which caused the disease are allowed to return. The treatment is not curative like having your appendix removed.

Some gum disease is not readily treatable and regardless of the treatment or improved oral hygiene the teeth continue to loosen. The best idea is to avoid the problem in the first place. Prevent it by flossing and brushing.

White Teeth

If after brushing or having your teeth cleaned you still think your teeth are not white enough, don’t brush harder. It will wear your enamel off and actually make your teeth darker by allowing the yellow dentin layer to show through. Cleaning only removes surface stain. Internal stain must be professionally bleached out. Ask us about bleaching if you are interested.