

# Dental Health News®

Compliments of Dr. Angela C. Canfield

## News from the office of...



**Dr. Angela C. Canfield**

Greetings to all our patients!

Now that summer is officially behind us and the fall schedule is in full swing, we'd like to ensure that you and your family are up-to-date on your dental checkups.

Remember that dental health is a lifelong commitment, and as you can see from the article on page 2, is one that includes not only good daily dental hygiene and regular visits to the dentist, but also healthy eating habits.

Remember, with the holidays — and all the accompanying photo opportunities — just around the corner, you might consider planning for tooth whitening or other cosmetic improvements now.

Enjoy your newsletter, and we look forward to seeing you again soon!

All the best,

*Angela Canfield*

Dr. Angela C. Canfield

## THE PRICE OF DENTAL HEALTH

Everything has its price, including dental care — especially when it's a *lack* of dental care.

A study in the *Journal of Periodontology* discovered that cumulative health care costs were 21 percent higher for patients with severe periodontal (gum) disease than for those without gum disease. While the immediate conclusion might be that the higher costs were attributed directly to tooth and gum issues, it's important to recognize that dental disease and infections in the mouth can easily travel into the body, and cause havoc with many other, seemingly unrelated, health issues.

While more research continues to be conducted, findings to-date confirm a link between gum disease and diabetes, and a possible link between gum disease and a higher risk of heart disease, stroke and preterm births. People with respiratory diseases or osteoporosis may also be threatened by existing gum disease.

And then there's the issue of taking time off from work and school. Statistics released by

the Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Resource Center show that over 164 million hours of work were lost in a single year by employed people in the United States, and over 51 million school hours were missed annually by school-aged children due to a dental problem or visit to a dental office.

The price of poor dental care can also be felt on a social level, made evident on the employment front. For example, employers have been known to view potential job candidates with missing front teeth as less intelligent, less trust-worthy and less desirable than ones with a full set of healthy teeth.

A good oral hygiene program, including regular, professional cleanings in our office, can go a long way toward preventing gum disease, and all its associated medical, economic and social issues.

If you haven't already scheduled your next dental visit, please take a moment to call today.

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# YOUR RECIPE FOR DENTAL HEALTH

**We all know that a well-balanced diet is an important element in the development of healthy teeth and bones. We recognize the importance of ensuring that our children get the recommended daily number of servings of milk, cheese and other good calcium sources, but let's not forget that balancing our own, grown-up nutritional intake is an ongoing requirement, as well.**



You may be surprised to learn that teeth are “alive,” and that in order to keep them healthy you need to maintain a well-balanced diet that includes potassium, phosphorous, vitamin D and calcium. The best dietary sources for vitamin D and calcium are dairy products, such as milk, yogurt and cheese, while potassium and phosphorous can be found naturally in fruits and vegetables.

Teeth, like bones, are calcified tissues. Teeth begin to form in the first few months of fetal life and the mineralization process continues into late adolescence. An adequate intake of calcium is essential for proper development of tooth structures and, as such, it is recommended that children up to age 11 consume 700 to 900 mg of calcium per day, while pre-teens and teenagers require between 1,000 to 1,200 mg of calcium or more per day to keep up with the growth spurts common to this age group. (As a guideline, there are about 300 mg of calcium in one cup of milk.)

Calcium consumption is important at all stages of life. When adults don't get enough calcium in their diet, their body is forced to borrow what it needs from their bones. Continued withdrawals of calcium from the “bone bank” can lead to osteoporosis, or brittle bones. In fact, dentists are often the first ones to notice the initial indications of osteoporosis, because, as the jawbone is surrendering calcium for needs elsewhere in the body, the bone will weaken and teeth will loosen, creating gaps where bacteria can invade.

According to the Academy of General Dentistry, teeth may soften when there is a shortage of vitamin D, making them more susceptible to decay and periodontal disease. Because vitamin D is produced in the body

with sun exposure, a deficiency in this vitamin is not common, however it can develop in some who don't consume enough milk or fish.

Even if your teeth are healthy, they won't do much good if they are held in place by deteriorating bone and gums. That's why it's important to ensure that your diet includes not only enough calcium and vitamin D, but also enough vitamin B and C, to help keep gum disease away.

If you're a vegetarian or vegan, you should be especially watchful of your diet to ensure you don't experience any deficiencies in calcium, vitamin D, riboflavin, vitamin B12 or complete proteins. Even vegans who don't get their calcium from milk, yogurt and cheese can get what they need from fortified food products, such as certain breakfast cereals, fortified orange juice, soy products, almonds and some dark green vegetables, like broccoli.

Ask us about healthy food options that will improve not only your dental health, but your general health, as well.



# “JUST” A TOOTHACHE, OR SOMETHING MORE?



**There are times when a toothache isn't just a toothache. In fact, ignoring toothache pain can sometimes even have life-threatening implications.**

A toothache can present itself in a number of different ways. You may feel sensitivity to cold or heat, or pain when you bite down, or even a radiating type of ache after eating something very sweet. The pain may come and go over a long period of time, or may appear suddenly, and severely.

While many toothaches are a result of dental decay or a crack in a tooth, you may also feel the same type of pain from sinusitis — inflamed sinuses due to a bacterial infection — or sinus congestion from a cold, flu or an allergy. Nerve pain can sometimes feel like a toothache, too.

The most serious type of toothache may be the result of a dental abscess, from an infected nerve in a tooth.

It can intensify into an infection of the mouth, face, jaw or throat as bacteria extend from a cavity into the surrounding tissues.

In addition to a feeling of pressure, and an intense, persistent throbbing, the tooth may be sensitive to heat, and chewing or biting. As the infection worsens, you may develop a fever, a swelling in your face or cheek, and tender, swollen lymph nodes under your jaw or in your neck. An abscessed tooth is the most dangerous of toothaches — if not treated, the infection can spread into your bloodstream, leading to severe complications.

Don't wait for toothache pain to just “go away.” Please call us for advice about any type of dental discomfort.

## LIKE TO TOOT YOUR OWN HORN? LET US KNOW!

**Sometimes a chair-side chat about your hobbies can spur a very important discussion about your hobbies' impact on your dental treatments. That you play a wind instrument is a fine example of something to share with your dentist.**



A critical component of a musician's technique is “embouchure,” defined as “the way in which a player applies his or her mouth to the mouthpiece of a brass or wind instrument.” More precisely, embouchure involves the synchronization of the lips, tongue, mouth and facial muscles in the production of a brass or wind instrument's tone and range. Any variation in a person's embouchure can affect the outcome of their music, which is why it's so important to inform your dentist if you're a musician, before certain dental procedures are initiated. For example, the application of bonding or dental veneers on the front teeth can significantly change the way a musician moves his or her mouth when playing an instrument. In fact, changing your front teeth can even affect how you speak, until you get used to the change.

If you're a student or someone who shares a woodwind or brass instrument with others, it's important to recognize that shared instruments often are not properly sanitized after use, and run the risk of being heavily contaminated with a variety of bacteria and fungi — even weeks after use.

Ask us about the “mouth-body” connection when it comes to illnesses, and in the meantime, please sanitize any shared instruments properly before putting them in your mouth.

# TRICKS FOR YOUR TREATS



If you don't have a little ghost or goblin to sneak Halloween candy from, you may be tempted to take advantage of the post-Halloween candy sales for yourself. Everyone deserves to indulge once in a while, but no matter how you acquire the treats, there are ways to avoid turning those petite treats into a big dental disaster.

Know that it's not necessarily the amount of sugar we consume that's a problem from a dental perspective, but the amount of time that sugar stays on our teeth. For example, if you're trying to decide whether to pop a chocolate bar into your mouth or unroll a fruit leather strip, you might be surprised to hear that the chocolate is your better choice. The reason why is that the sticky fruit will remain on your teeth longer, while the chocolate will quickly wash away with your saliva.

Once a sticky, sugary treat finds its way between or behind your teeth, it encourages the formation of plaque — a clear coating of bacteria. The bacteria feeds off sugar and starch in the mouth and produces acid that attacks the teeth. Continued attacks can cause the enamel on the teeth to break down, eventually leading to tooth decay.

Remember to floss and brush thoroughly, immediately following your next sweet treat. At the very least, rinse your mouth out with water to get rid of the sugary evidence!

## ALLERGY ALERT!

In addition to updating us on your medical history, current medications and drug allergies, we ask that patients please advise us on any other sensitivities or non-drug allergies, too.

Materials such as latex, commonly used in dental gloves, masks and syringes, are known to trigger allergic reactions. If you know that you're allergic to latex, please be sure to let us know, and we'll take precautions, such as using latex-free gloves during your dental appointments.

Also, tell us if you've ever had a reaction to jewelry; you may have a metal sensitivity. Some dental crowns, veneers, inlays or dentures may have nickel, chromium-containing materials or other metals in them. We can suggest more compatible dental materials for your case.

Please don't avoid our office because you're worried about allergic reactions. It's important to maintain your regular continuing care appointments to ensure optimum oral health. Simply advise us of any allergies or sensitivities you have, and we will work with you to provide a safe environment for all your dental needs.

## Premier Dental Designs



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