



Raymond J. Finnerty, D.D.S., Linda W. Wu, D.D.S., & Rosario T. Palabrica, D.D.S.

Family Dentistry

**Produced for
the patients of
Drs. Raymond J.
Finnerty,
Linda W. Wu, &
Rosario T. Palabrica**

Summer 2007

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday 7:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
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Special reasons to visit us

Generally, dental cleanings and checkups every six months are enough to keep your teeth healthy and your smile bright. However, sometimes we may recommend that you see us more often. Among these special circumstances are:

- the presence of periodontal disease
- tobacco use
- the presence of diabetes or another systemic disease
- a high rate of dental caries
- those undergoing or about to undergo cancer treatment

These and other problems may make it necessary for us to see you more than twice a year. People who are recovering from periodontal disease, for instance, often need more frequent checkups to be sure the disease is under control.

Diabetics have a higher risk of oral problems, including gum disease, decay, and fungal infections of the mouth. Smokers are more prone to gum disease and are more likely to have increased tartar buildup and to lose teeth. Cancer patients should see us before beginning therapy to start with a clean mouth. They may suffer from dry mouth, a burning sensation of the tongue, and have increased risk of oral infections.

In order for the dental care you receive to be most effective, it's important for you to visit us as often as we recommend. Your dental wellness is our overall goal. With your cooperation, we can help you achieve a healthy mouth, even under difficult circumstances.

What's attacking your teeth?

We hear a lot about sweets and cavities, but when we get to the root of the matter, the problem is bacteria. Bacteria that live in our mouths are always there, but they can either increase or decrease, depending on how we treat them. Feed them and they will multiply, producing acids that break down tooth enamel. Starve them, and they will decrease in number.

Foods bacteria love include sugary sweets, of course, but it doesn't stop there. Carbohydrates—which include starchy foods, such as chips, crackers, and pretzels—are just as dangerous to teeth as most candies. Complicating matters is the stickiness of the food or its ability to become wedged between teeth. Foods that melt away easily, such as chocolate, may actually cause less damage. So the first step is to avoid foods that are more likely to cause cavities because of their high starch or sugar content.

Unfortunately, even seemingly healthy foods, such as popcorn, can cause problems when they're stuck on and between teeth. Keeping teeth clean throughout the day by brushing after meals, rinsing with plain water, and flossing is essential to avoiding decay. Bacteria tend to be most active about 20 minutes after you eat. They'll stay active, too, if food debris is left on the teeth to feed them.

Your job, if you want to keep your teeth healthy, is to avoid foods that will cause cavities, and remove food debris found in plaque or between teeth as soon as possible after eating. By coupling good daily dental care with regular visits to our office, the bacteria in your mouth can be defeated. When you take the tooth-decay battle seriously each and every day, you increase your chances of winning the war!



Thank you for all your referrals. We appreciate them!

Don't skip that checkup

Sometimes, when things are going well with your teeth, and your life is really busy, you may start to think: "Hey, I can skip this checkup and make do with just one this year." However, it's never a good idea to just skip a checkup.

Here are some good reasons to make your dental cleaning and oral health check a priority:

- 1. Prevention**—When your teeth are cleaned regularly, you're less likely to have cavities or develop periodontal disease. That means you're more likely to keep your teeth for life...and, if any problems do develop, we'll catch them early before they become more difficult to treat.
- 2. Oral-cancer detection**—Whether you're at increased risk for oral cancer or not, you should know that this disease can often be cured when it's found early. An oral-cancer examination is done during every cleaning and checkup at our office.
- 3. Take advantage of your insurance benefits**—If you have dental insurance, your biannual visits for preventive care are usually covered. Make sure you're getting all the benefits you and your employer are paying for.
- 4. Better overall health**—Oral health is tied to overall health in ways researchers are only beginning to understand. Strokes and heart attacks have both been linked to the presence of periodontal disease, so keeping your mouth healthy could be better for your overall health as well.
- 5. To have the smile you want**—Clean teeth and fresh breath are attractive attributes. White, straight teeth are considered a mark of beauty. If you're not quite happy with the look of your smile, talk to us about ways to improve it at your next checkup.

What's good for your teeth...and gums?

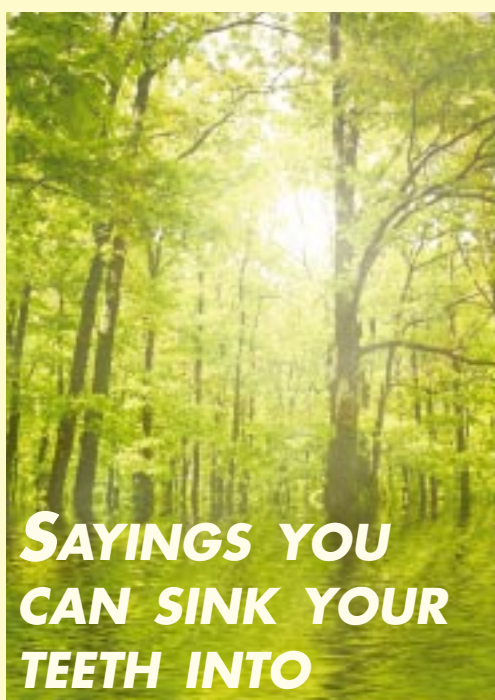
Candy bad, fruit good. Sounds rather primitive, but it is how many of us think with regard to eating for a healthy mouth. The truth is, good nutrition may do more than just stave off cavities. Research has shown that certain nutrients can decrease your chances of developing periodontal disease as well.

The researchers looked at men and women with low calcium intakes. They discovered that those who ingested less than 500 milligrams of calcium per day were much more susceptible to periodontal disease. It's believed that the link between calcium and the development of healthy bones is involved in this finding, since the alveolar bone supports teeth in the jaw.

Similar research was done for vitamin C intake. The research showed that those who ingested less than 60 milligrams per day were more likely to suffer from gingivitis. Gingivitis is the first sign of periodontal disease. Patients who have gingivitis exhibit inflammation of the gums and may notice bleeding when they brush and floss. Vitamin C can help the body to repair damaged tissue.

So it's not just a matter of choosing fruit over candy when reaching for a snack. If you want to lower your chances of developing gum disease, consider what improving your nutritional intake could do for you. What's good for your body is also good for your teeth. Let your diet be one of the steps you take to keep your whole self healthier.





SAYINGS YOU CAN SINK YOUR TEETH INTO

Ever wonder about the origins of some of those “toothy” sayings? Some sayings used every day, such as “armed to the teeth” and “a tooth for a tooth,” have interesting and colorful beginnings. Others are a bit more obvious.

For instance, the saying “*long in the tooth*” has a very practical basis. This saying is related to age. Someone who is “long in the tooth” is an older person. The gums do recede as we age, exposing more of the root, but the origin of this saying comes from assessing the value of a horse. Horses that were long in the tooth were older than they may have appeared.

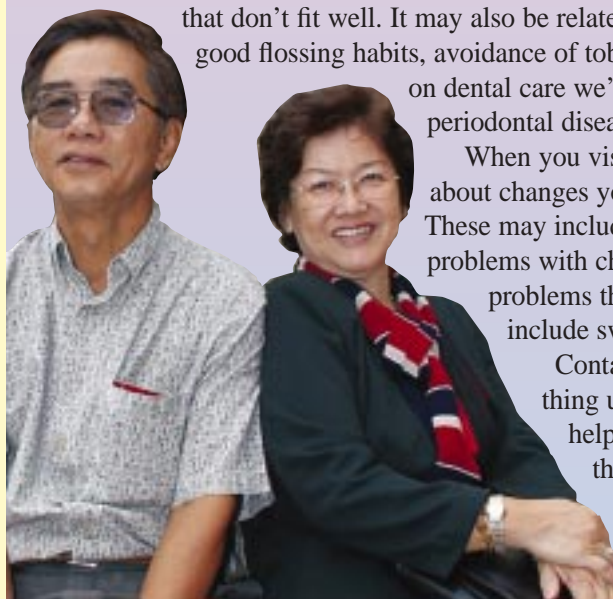
“*Armed to the teeth*” is another toothy saying that dates back to a bygone era. It’s a term that originated in the pirate haven of Port Royal, Jamaica, during the 17th century. Pirates carried a number of weapons into battle, and often put a knife between their teeth for added ammunition. Hence the phrase “armed to the teeth,” meaning bearing maximum weaponry.

“*Tongue in cheek*” is a saying that means not to take whatever was said seriously. It’s believed the term was coined by actors who actually stuck their tongue in their cheek to avoid laughing when they weren’t supposed to. Today, it most often refers to saying something funny, but keeping one’s face serious so as not to spoil the joke.

The golden years

Growing older is inevitable. Oral-health problems related to age may not be. Although changes occur in the mouth just as they do the rest of the body, by meeting them head-on, most seniors can keep their teeth healthy for life.

Problems associated with age, such as dry mouth, can be alleviated by sipping plain water, which is good for your overall health as well as refreshing for your mouth. Root decay, which occurs as the roots become exposed and teeth seem to grow longer, can also be battled with good home care and regular checkups. Being careful to brush the roots gently and floss well each day can help avoid decay in this area. Fluoride gels or rinses can reduce or prevent root decay. Gum disease has a number of causes, such as the use of tobacco products and partial dentures that don’t fit well. It may also be related to diabetes or anemia. Again, good flossing habits, avoidance of tobacco products, and following up on dental care we’ve recommended can help keep periodontal disease at bay.



When you visit us, it’s important to tell us about changes you’ve noticed in your mouth. These may include tooth sensitivity, loose teeth, problems with chewing, or changes in taste. Other problems that should be reported to us include swelling, bleeding, sores, or lumps.

Contact us whenever you notice anything unusual in your mouth. We can help you take on these problems in the early stages to keep your mouth as healthy as possible all through your golden years.

What’s causing your BAD BREATH?

Your kids mention it...maybe your spouse...people you work with are too polite to say anything, but you suspect they groan to each other about face-to-face meetings with you. You’ve tried everything—mouthwashes, mints, breath sprays—everything, that is, except asking your dentist. That’s too bad, too, because we can help.

Finding the cause of the problem is essential to solving issues of bad breath. Often, it’s one of the following:

- ✗ tobacco use—including both smoking and chewing tobacco
- ✗ dry mouth—not producing enough saliva to wash away bacteria
- ✗ a health problem—a sinus infection, for instance
- ✗ poor oral care—can result in a buildup of bacteria in the mouth, especially at the back of the tongue
- ✗ gum disease—excessive plaque laden with oral bacteria
- ✗ stomach contents or stomach acid

Some of these problems can be handled with a plan that includes home care and visits to our office on a recommended schedule. If the problem appears to be a medical one, we’ll refer you to a physician who can help. Halitosis isn’t pleasant for anyone, but it affects the person with the bad breath most of all. If you or a loved one has chronic breath problems, let us help you find the cause and the solution. All you have to lose is your bad breath.



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More than a little gingivitis

The war against periodontal disease is being won. In the mid-1970s, it was estimated that about three-quarters of the world suffered from this oral ailment, which generally resulted in tooth loss. By the turn of the century, gum disease affected only a little over a third of the population, and only about 12 percent of those had severe periodontitis. That's good news.

However, there's a serious sidebar to this triumph. Researchers are continuing to find correlations between the presence of gum disease and increased risk for heart disease in patients over the age of 50. Patients who had acute myocardial infarctions (heart attacks) were more likely to have plaque buildup, the presence of periodontal pockets, and to be tobacco users.

Although more research is needed, there is enough evidence for patients with gingivitis to be concerned. Changes in diet and lifestyle, including better home care and visits to us on the schedule we've recommended for you, can help make a difference. Talk to your physician about steps you can take to reduce your risk of heart disease. Talk to us about what we can do to help keep your teeth and gums healthy. The war on gum disease can be won, and we stand ready to assist you.



*A summer smile—
in just one visit!*

The onset of summer is a concern for those who want to look their best in shorts and bathing suits. While you're dieting and working out to get that sleek, summer look, don't forget your smile. A smile that's white and clean is the perfect complement to that slimmer body.

To tone up your teeth to match your abs, check out the services we offer. At the top of the list is whitening. A whiter smile is now possible in just a visit or two to our office. It all begins with a consultation on what we can do for you.

If you feel your teeth need more than just whitening—if you'd like them to appear straighter, longer, or more evenly spaced—we can help with that, too. Techniques such as bonding, crown lengthening, and porcelain veneers can be used to change the look of your smile.

Have the smile you want this summer with a little help from our office. Call us at **703-524-0288** to schedule your cosmetic consult today!

