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# PREVENTION: THE BEST DENTAL INSURANCE THERE IS

**As dentists, every patient we have has at one time or another asked the question "What's the best dental insurance to get?" Well, dental coverage is a good thing, to be sure, and if you are lucky enough to have dental insurance as part of your employee dental package you are fortunate.**

However, here's the real deal: nothing equals preventative care, when it comes to keeping your teeth and gums healthy on a budget. Without a doubt, the best insurance for tomorrow is paying attention to your dental care today.

Good dental care starts at home and is a habit worth cultivating. Our teeth are sup-

posed to last throughout our lives. Good dental hygiene is at the center of so many issues that can affect our health. Our teeth are key in being able to eat a variety of foods required to keep our bodies healthy. Gum diseases can cause all sorts of health disorders. In addition, healthy teeth and gums dramatically affect us cosmetically, as well. When your teeth and gums are healthy – your overall sense of well-being is improved.

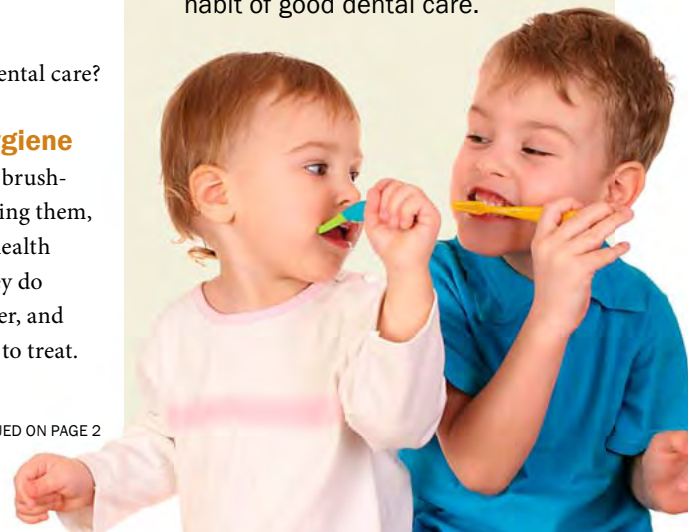
So, what are the basics of good dental care?

## **Practicing Proper Dental Hygiene**

Daily dental health care, such as brushing the teeth properly as well as flossing them, generally help in preventing dental health problems from occurring. And if they do occur, the conditions are much milder, and hence are less painful and expensive to treat.

## **HERE'S WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW:**

- > 51 million hours of school are lost each year by children due to dental related illness. Dental hygiene is a great example of where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. As dentists, we all preach over and over that prevention is the best dental insurance there is. At the end of the day, good dental hygiene starts in the home during the early school years - which will hopefully develop into a lifelong habit of good dental care.



Apart from visiting the dentist regularly, there are some simple dental health care practices that we can incorporate in our daily lives which reduce the chances of developing dental problems like cavities in the teeth and gum disease:

- Brushing the teeth twice a day as well as flossing everyday.
- Using toothpaste and other dental products containing fluoride, after consulting your dentist.
- Using a mouth rinse containing fluoride, after consulting your dentist.
- Avoiding snacking between meals, and consuming a well-balanced diet.
- Rinsing the mouth thoroughly after meals.

### Brushing and Flossing Properly for Dental Health

In order to maintain dental health one needs to incorporate the correct ways of brushing and flossing the teeth:

- Using a soft-bristle toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste, gently brush the teeth in front, behind, and on the top for the molars.
- Use short back and forth movements and small circular movements.
- Brush gently and carefully along the line of the gum.
- And also brush your tongue gently in order to keep it free from bacteria.

Also, one needs to use a dental floss in order to clean the spaces between the teeth. Flossing enables one to remove the food particles as well as plaque that cannot be accessed with a toothbrush. It is important to rinse the mouth after flossing.

In case there is bleeding of the gums or it hurts while flossing, find out the correct way to do it by calling our office. Our staff is always willing to help our patients with preventative care.

## Cracked Teeth

**While cracked teeth are not completely preventable, you can take some steps to make your teeth less susceptible to cracks.**

- Don't chew on hard objects such as ice, unpopped popcorn kernels or pens.
- Don't clench or grind your teeth.
- If you clench or grind your teeth while you sleep, talk to your dentist about getting a retainer or other mouthguard to protect your teeth.
- Wear a mouthguard or a mask when playing contact sports.

If you experience symptoms of a fractured or cracked tooth, call our office immediately. If detected early, a cracked/fractured tooth can often be more likely to be maintained.



# The Tooth, THE WHOLE TOOTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TOOTH...

**As the story goes, the tooth fairy comes when a child has lost a tooth. Commonly, she is very small, and she comes in the middle of the night. The child is to leave the tooth under his or her pillow, so that the tooth fairy can take it during her visit.**

Once she has taken the tooth, she leaves monetary reimbursement under the pillow (this action is done by a parent). The teeth are then taken to her tower, and used for her purposes.

**SO, WHERE DID THIS STORY COME FROM – AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT REALLY HAPPENS TO ALL THOSE TEETH?**

The tooth fairy has appeared in folk tales throughout the western world and parts of South Africa, in various forms since the 18th century. While most tooth fairy experts (yes, they really do exist) agree that it is likely that the modern version of the fairy stems from a much loved French story about a tooth-gathering mouse that turns itself into a fairy. However, for history buffs – the tooth fairy has its roots with the Vikings in 900 AD. Apparently, the Vikings had a “tooth fee” – a monetary gift for children in exchange for their teeth,



As with all other commerce transactions the tooth fairy has, in her infinite wisdom, kept up with the times. Rosemary Wells, acknowledged as the world's leading authority on the tooth fairy, actually tracked the exchange rate for teeth from 1900 to 1980 against the consumer price index and found that the tooth fairy has kept pace with inflation. **THE GOING RATE FOR A TOOTH THESE DAYS? ACCORDING TO SECURIAN DENTAL PLANS... \$2.00 PER TOOTH.**

**FOR A CHARMING MOVIE...**  
**Check out the 1997 Disney movie Toothless, with Kirstie Alley as a grumpy dentist turned tooth fairy.**



## Common Dental Health Problems

**Tooth Cavities or Decay:** The outer hard coating of teeth is known as enamel, which gets covered each day with a thin build-up of bacteria. Eventually, this bacteria results in holes forming in the enamel, which are known as cavities or caries. Brushing as well as flossing daily can prevent tooth decay. A fluoride toothpaste can also be useful in preventing tooth cavities.

**Dental Plaque and Tartar:** Dental plaque is the thin film of bacteria and mucus that get deposited on the teeth that leads to the development of tooth decay and gum disease. If this is not removed every day, it hardens and forms into tartar, which is also known as calculus. Daily brushing and flossing help in preventing the build-up of plaque and tartar. However, once tartar has been formed, only the dentist can remove it.

**Gum Diseases:** Gum diseases occur due to plaque building up along, as well as under, the lining of the gum. These lead to infections, which cause the gums to become swollen, painful and tender, and even lead to bleeding. When the gums bleed, it is known as gingivitis. Daily brushing and flossing are preventive measures for gum disease. If the condition worsens, or in case of other diseases of the gums, a dentist will have to treat the condition. If left untreated, it can ruin the gums, the bones, and the rest of the tissue around the teeth. Eventually, it may even lead to the teeth having to be removed.

Some of the other dental health problems are bad breath or halitosis, and tooth sensitivity. Each can be prevented by good dental health practices, but if they do occur, they must be treated by a dentist.

which were later used in jewelry or amulet making. The Vikings were a superstitious bunch and held a widespread belief that having an article of clothing, a piece of hair or a tooth belonging to your child in your possession brought power and luck in battle.

The tooth fairy has no religious significance and no holiday affiliation, so it can readily be accepted by everyone. However, perhaps like the Vikings, parents for generations have found a certain charm in the tooth fairy and the attention she brings to the rites of passage for our children as they grow – losing their “baby teeth” for their permanent “grown up” ones.

In modern times the fashion for teeth necklaces has greatly diminished and the general consensus is that the tooth fairy simply collects the teeth, labels them and neatly files them away in a museum-like castle.

# INTERESTING

- 74% of Americans would rather go grocery shopping than floss.
- Over a lifetime, the average American will spend 38.5 days on average brushing their teeth.
- Surveys have shown that teens who smiled in their yearbook pictures were more likely to have successful careers and marriages than their peers who didn't.
- The average woman smiles about 62 times per day – while a man smiles only about 8.
- Like fingerprints, everyone's tongue print is different.
- When given a choice most people will choose a blue toothbrush over a red one.
- Toothbrushes should be kept at least six feet away from a toilet to avoid airborne particles resulting from flushing.
- 60% of people don't know that a sore jaw, when accompanied with chest pain, can signal a heart attack – especially in women.
- 80% of all people asked are not happy with their smile.

## How Many Teeth Are We Supposed to Have?

Children's teeth begin forming before birth. As early as 4 months, the first primary (or baby) teeth to erupt through the gums are the lower central incisors, followed closely by the upper central incisors. Although all 20 primary teeth usually appear by age 3, the pace and order of their eruption varies.

Permanent teeth begin appearing around age 6, starting with the first molars and lower central incisors. This process continues until approximately age 21.

Adults have 28 permanent teeth, or up to 32 including the third molars (or wisdom teeth).



J. Richard Smart, D.D.S.

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Our practice grows by referrals from our loyal patients. Thank you for referring your friends and family.

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