

Scott G. Clinton, D.D.S.
201 Ferris Avenue, Suite J
Waxahachie, TX 75165

Phone: (972) 937-4370
Fax: (972) 937-4369
www.scottclintondds.com
waxfamdent@sbcglobal.net

WAXAHACHIE



Dental News Bites

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4 SUMMER 2009



The Whole Tooth and Nothing but the Tooth

Q. What are periodontal diseases?

The word *periodontal* literally means "around the tooth." Periodontal diseases are serious bacterial infections that destroy the attachment fibers and supporting bone that hold your teeth in your mouth. Left untreated, these diseases can lead to tooth loss. There are many forms of periodontal disease: Gingivitis, Aggressive periodontitis, Chronic Periodontitis, Periodontitis as a manifestation of systemic diseases.

Q. What can I do to avoid periodontal disease?

To keep your teeth for a lifetime, you must remove the plaque from your teeth and gums every day with proper brushing and flossing. Regular dental visits are also important. Daily cleaning will help keep calculus formation to a minimum, but it won't completely prevent it. A professional cleaning at least twice a year is necessary to remove calculus from places your toothbrush and floss may have missed. Dental insurance generally covers the cost of routine dental visits.

Q. Can I catch periodontal disease from others?

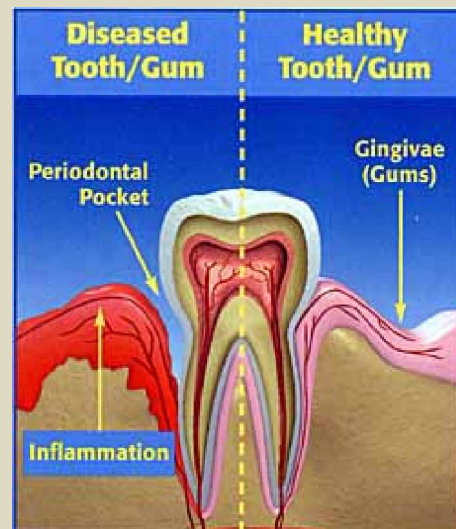
Periodontal disease may be passed from parents to children and between couples, according to an article in the September 1997 issue of the *Journal of the American Dental Association*. Researchers suggest that bacteria causing periodontal disease are passed through saliva. This means that when a family or couple comes into contact with each other's saliva, they're at risk for contracting the periodontal disease of another family member. Based on this research, the American Academy of Periodontology recognizes that treatment of gum disease may involve entire families. If one family member has periodontal disease, the AAP recommends that all family members see a dental professional for a periodontal disease screening.

Q. Is it normal for my gums to bleed when I brush my teeth?

Bleeding gums are one of the signs of gum disease. Think of gum tissue as the skin on your hand. If your hands bled every time you washed them, you would know something was wrong.

Q. What are pockets?

Your bone and gum tissue should fit snugly around your teeth like a turtleneck around your neck. When you have periodontal disease, this supporting tissue and bone is destroyed, forming "pockets" around the teeth. Over time, these pockets become deeper, providing a larger space in which bacteria can live. These deep pockets collect even more bacteria, resulting in further bone and tissue loss. Eventually the teeth require extraction.



FALSE

Gum disease is a minor infection.

FACT: Bleeding gums are one of nine warning signs of gum disease. The gum tissue inside your mouth is equivalent to the size of a soft ball. If you had a bleeding, swollen, tender soft ball sized sore on your body, would you visit the doctor?

Other signs of gum disease include: sores in your mouth; gums that have pulled away from the teeth; persistent bad breath; pus between the teeth and gums (leaving bad breath); loose or separating teeth; a change in the way the teeth fit together; and a change in the fit of partial dentures.

FALSE

Gum disease doesn't affect overall health.

FACT: Emerging research links periodontal disease to other health problems including, but not limited to: heart and respiratory diseases; stroke; osteoporosis; and diabetes.

FALSE

Tooth loss is a natural part of aging.

FACT: With good oral hygiene and regular professional care, your teeth are meant to last a lifetime. However, if left untreated, periodontal (gum) disease can lead to tooth loss. It is the primary cause of tooth loss in adults 35 and over.

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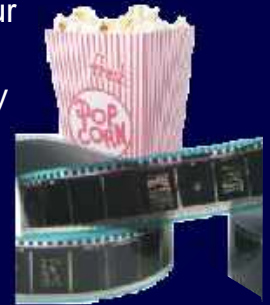
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Acid Erosion in children: a growing concern

Dentists are increasingly concerned about acid erosion, caused by acids found in fruits, juices and soft drinks in today's diet. These acids soften the tooth enamel, allowing it to be slowly worn away.

Did you know that 9 out of 10 pediatric dentists see signs of acid erosion in children?

This is important to address because acid erosion in "baby" teeth, leads to issues in adult teeth.

Most children's permanent teeth come through between the ages of 6-13 years of age. These teeth are vulnerable to attack from acids.

Acid erosion cannot be reversed. If left untreated, children may need dental treatment to protect teeth and the underlying dentine from further damage.

Please have your child checked every six months by a dentist.



SIGNS OF ACID EROSION

Lack of surface ridges

Transparency in the incisors

Erosive Wear on the first permanent molars



Advice for Parents:



- Try to limit the number of times a day your child's teeth are exposed to acidic foods and drinks (ideally no more than four times a day.)

- Encourage children to use a straw when consuming acidic drinks.
- Children should brush their teeth for two minutes twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Try to avoid brushing for as long as possible after consuming acidic drinks, because tooth enamel remains soft and susceptible to abrasion for about an hour after consumption. Instead, rinse with water or chew sugarless gum to stimulate saliva and help neutralize the acid.