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DENTAL WELLNESS* NEWSLETTER



Note from Doc Here in California seasonal changes are not abrupt, as fall gently weaves its way into summer with cooler evenings and shorter days. In looking back over the years, it amazes me to see the many changes that have become interwoven within The Dental Wellness Center with heightened and new skills from over 4,000 hours of continuing education, improvements in laboratory materials and completely new technologies such as computerized scanning used in the fabrication of implants and porcelain restorations, and will also eventually replace the need for use of that oozy material used in taking impressions. Now that's real change!

MERCURY IN YOUR MOUTH?

The Dental Wellness Center became "mercury free" by discontinuing the use of mercury amalgam fillings well over 20 years ago. The original rationale for ending their usage was that most all teeth filled with this substance would eventually fracture due to the expansion of the metal, sometimes "mortally" (down the middle) and need to be extracted, require root canal treatment, gum surgery or both as well as a crown afterwards to restore the tooth properly. Also, other materials were coming onto the market that were approaching the longevity and positive attrition (wear) qualities of these fillings. Another thing, which was not even addressed in dental school, was the fact that mercury vapor released during their placement could be unhealthy not only for the patient but also for the doctor and assistant. It was also becoming quite evident from research that mercury vapor continues to be released after the amalgam filling material becomes hardened within teeth. Realizing these facts, we have become "mercury safe," which means that we not only don't place mercury amalgam fillings, but implement safety features that protect our patients as well as ourselves during their removal. The following is some information about the metal element mercury, fillings that have mercury amalgamated within them, how we handle their removal and the rationale for their replacement.

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Facts:

- Mercury is the most poisonous, non-radioactive, naturally occurring substance on our planet.
- Mercury amalgam fillings continually release mercury vapor.
- Even the American Dental Association admits that 1 - 3 micrograms (mcg) of mercury vapor/day is released from these fillings.
- One mcg of mercury vapor equals 4,000,000,000,000 (4 trillion) mercury atoms.
- They have been commonly referred to as "silver amalgam" fillings when in fact they are composed of only 35% silver, 50% mercury along with other metals.
- The amount of mercury released from these fillings can vary depending upon their number, size, amount, and duration of stimulation. (Temperature, chewing, teeth grinding, etc. View "Smoking Teeth" video <http://iaomt.org/videos/>)
- Mercury vaporizes in incremental proportions from temperatures above 68 degrees F. Our body temperatures are 98.6 degrees F.
- They are banned in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and Germany and Austria have banned their use in pregnant women and children up to age 18.
- Galvanic action between a gold and an amalgam filling can cause a heightened constant release of mercury, even when they haven't been stimulated.

Quarterly Quote
 If you want someone to do a good job, give them a good job to do.
 Frederick Herzberg

For more information on this subject as to our protocol for removing them, and basics regarding their replacement, click on the link of the article of the same name from the home page of our website, www.rpm dentistry.com.

TREATMENT SUCCESSES

This story relates to our last issue's article about the relative quality of the dentist and dental laboratory.

Problem: The top image displays a young woman's third set of porcelain crown restorations on her upper front teeth. They were monochromatic and did not represent natural tooth form. Their fit under the gums was poor which caused bacterial entrapment and infected gums. The remaining tooth structure was dark and radiated through them.



Solution: After developing gum health through an individualized program, careful removal of the crowns and preparation of the underlying tooth structure including lightening and strengthening it. Provisional crowns were made to develop optimum form and function. Then fabrication of new porcelain crowns that matched the color of her surrounding teeth by a quality laboratory technician.



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* Wellness denotes health, and true health is based upon sound relationships bounded by mutual trust and respect between practitioner, staff and patient. It is an attitude that involves learning and development of common goals for prevention and treatment.



Bruxism



Bruxism is the technical term for grinding and clenching that abrades teeth and may cause facial pain. People who grind and clench, called bruxers, unintentionally bite down too hard at inappropriate times, such as in their sleep. In addition to grinding teeth, bruxers also may bite their fingernails, pencils and chew the inside of their cheek. People usually aren't diagnosed with bruxism until it is too late because so many people don't realize they have the habit. Others mistakenly believe that their teeth must touch at all times. About one in three people suffer from bruxism, which can be remedied by a dentist.

Can bruxism cause harm?

People who have otherwise healthy teeth and gums can clench so often and so hard that over time their teeth become sensitive. They experience jaw pain, tense muscles and headaches along with excessive wear on their teeth. If the bite is uneven, forceful biting when not eating may cause the jaw joints to move out of proper balance.

What are the signs?

When a person has bruxism, the tips of the teeth look flat. Teeth are worn down so much that the enamel is rubbed off, exposing the inside of the tooth which is called dentin. When exposed, dentin may become sensitive. Bruxers may experience pain in their temporomandibular joint(s) (TMJ's) and also popping, grating or clicking noise. Women seem to have a higher prevalence of jaw joint and head and neck pain, while men generally have less pain and more tooth wear. Tongue indentations are another sign of clenching. Stress and certain personality types are a factor also. For as long as humankind has existed, bruxism has affected people with nervous tension. Anger, pain and frustration can trigger bruxing. People who are aggressive, competitive and hurried may be at greater risk for bruxism.

What can be done about it?

Most often, the bite is not in synch with the TMJ's, so diagnosis is key in discovering how to alter the chewing system to halt the process. Models are mounted on a jaw simulator and if there are TMJ symptoms (pain, noise such as popping, grating or clicking) special CT scans are taken. From this information the optimum method for slowing or stopping the process is developed. For more information on this process, access the article, *Bioesthetics, Oral Beauty and Function* from the home page of our website, www.rpmdentistry.com.

If a person is primarily a night-time bruxer and has no symptoms, a night guard may lessen or halt the process. In any event, since tooth enamel will not grow back, it is a good idea to deal with it as soon as it is discovered.



Smokeless Tobacco: A Safe Alternative?



As awareness about the dangers of cigarette smoking increases, major U.S. tobacco companies have begun advertising smokeless tobacco products as safer alternatives to cigarettes, particularly for those trying to quit smoking.

According to an ABC news report, some experts say that smokeless tobacco is up to 90 percent less dangerous than smoking. Companies, such as Philip Morris USA (makers of Taboka) and Camel (makers of Snus), claim their smokeless products have the same amount of nicotine as cigarettes. The companies advertise that these products are "better" for nicotine users, & that dental professionals should urge patients who smoke to use smokeless tobacco products as cigarette alternatives.

Larry N. Williams, DDS, MAGD, ABGD, a dentist in Great Lakes, Ill., disagrees with the tobacco companies' message that smokeless tobacco is safer than cigarettes. He says, "Every argument from the tobacco industry glosses over the incidence of oral disease associated with smokeless [tobacco] use. Smokeless tobacco may be 90 percent safer than smoked tobacco when it comes to certain diseases; it depends what disease you are focusing on. But it is not 90 percent safer when you look at the incidence of oral disease."

According to Dr. Williams, there are many reasons why dentists should not urge their patients who smoke to switch to smokeless tobacco products, including a legal issue that could result from such advice. "The provider is at medico-legal risk for any future development of cancer or other disease if the patient switches based on this recommendation."

Even with smokeless products, the development of cancer or other diseases is quite possible, says Dr. Williams. "The real problems will arise once the use of smokeless tobacco increases to levels at or above smoked tobacco," he says. He speaks from his own experience when he treats patients who use smokeless tobacco. He warns, "My smokeless tobacco patients have had a very difficult time with cessation when compared to smoking tobacco users who are trying to quit due to the higher levels of nicotine in smokeless tobacco products."

Dr. Williams feels that the real issue is the chemical addiction to nicotine, not whether the product is smoke-free. He believes there is a need to develop products that are safer for those patients who are addicted to nicotine. "The patient really needs a nicotine delivery vehicle that is safe and acceptable" he says. "Tobacco products are simply nicotine delivery vehicles with varying levels of risk. By focusing on developing and delivering FDA approved, safe nicotine delivery vehicles to those who have an addiction, our patients will be much better off. I hope that the FDA looks at this issue to encourage the pharmaceutical industry to create safer products at a better cost for patients."

Team



News

As we say goodbye to summer, we all reflect on the good times had with family and friends. Jenean had a wonderful vacation on her favorite island, Catalina, with her family, spending time taking it easy, creating memories and getting some sun. Even though they go often, it's always an adventure filled with fun. Karen had her yearly camping trip with family, friends and future daughters-in law, in Sequoia National Forest. Only one bear sighting this year! She also had a fabulous time in Cape May, New Jersey with longtime friends. The trip was filled with shopping, museums, Victorian Home Tours, biking and plenty of basking on the beach. Blanca spent her summer getting ready for the new addition to her family. Her first grandbaby is due later this month. It's a Girl! We're so excited for her! Dr. McBride, Leanne and their family also spent some time on Catalina relaxing and rejuvenating. Leanne appreciated time to just get away, especially with a busy schedule at home that includes High School boys and football training. We are all back to work, ready to continue taking care of your needs, one smile at a time.



Presentations

Doc's Talks have been expanded to feature Dr. McBride along with Dr. Morgan Rogers on the same bill, whose holistic philosophy parallels that of the Dental Wellness Center. He has developed a method of systemic health development that quantifiably elevates one's health level by improved blood panels and fat loss - not water and muscle. Make your reservation **now!**



Seasonal Drawings!



Congratulations to winners Roger Johnson and Phil Leon for winning the Fourth of July and Summer Baskets. Be sure to get your name in for the Autumn Basket. Jenean still comes up with these one-of-a-kind creations that amaze us all!



Please let us know what topics you would like to hear about in upcoming issues.

