



DENTAL HEALTH LETTER

Produced for the
patients of
Catherine L.
Forster, D.D.S.

Fall 2004

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DO YOU HAVE A CRACKED TOOTH?

When you bite down, you feel a sharp pain. It quickly disappears, and perhaps you ignore it. You avoid certain foods or chew only on one side of your mouth. Does this sound familiar? If so, you may have a cracked tooth.

What causes a tooth to crack?

A tooth may crack due to a variety of factors:

- chewing on hard objects or foods such as ice, nuts, or hard candy
- an accident, such as a blow to the mouth
- grinding and clenching your teeth
- uneven chewing pressure
- stress on a tooth
- loss of a significant portion of tooth structure through wear, large fillings, or other restorations
- exposure of tooth enamel to temperature extremes, such as eating hot food and then drinking ice water
- brittleness of teeth that have undergone endodontic (root canal) treatment.

How can you tell if a tooth is cracked?

It could be difficult. You may not even be able to tell which tooth hurts or whether the pain is from an upper or lower tooth. A crack may appear as a hairline fracture, running vertically along the tooth. It often is invisible to the eye and may not even show on an x-ray.

You can help your dentist determine which tooth is causing the problem by noting when and where you have sensitivity to heat or cold, and to sweet, sour, or sticky food, as well as approximately where the pain is when you are chewing.

Does a cracked tooth hurt?

A cracked tooth might not be painful. However, a cracked tooth may hurt when a crack gets deeper, since the pressure of biting causes the crack to open. When you stop biting, the pressure is released and a sharp pain results as the crack quickly closes.

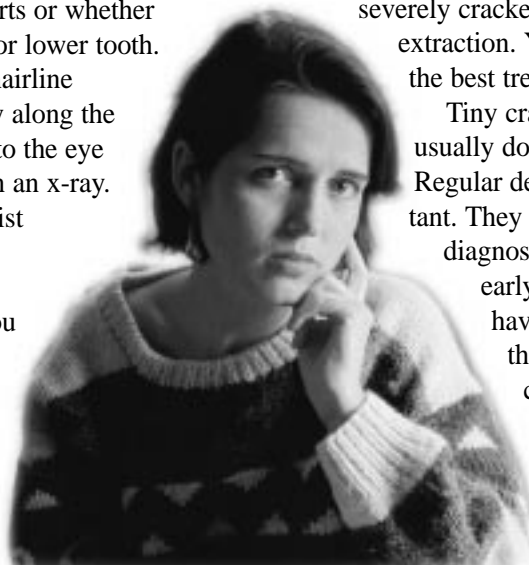
Even though the crack may be microscopic, when it opens, the pulp inside the tooth may become irritated. The pulp is a soft tissue that contains the tooth's nerves and blood vessels. Bacteria can enter the pulp and damage it. If the crack irritates the pulp, the tooth may become sensitive to temperature extremes. If the pulp becomes damaged or diseased as a result of the crack, root canal treatment may be necessary to save the tooth.

How is a cracked tooth treated?

Depending on the size and location of the crack, treatment may vary anywhere from a bite adjustment to a crown to a root canal treatment. Often, we try to cover and protect a cracked tooth before the crack causes damage. A severely cracked tooth may require extraction. Your dentist will determine the best treatment for you.

Tiny cracks are common and usually do not cause problems. Regular dental checkups are important. They enable your dentist to diagnose and treat problems in the early stages. If you continue to have pain, avoid chewing on that side of your mouth and call your dentist.

*Excerpts taken from an
American Dental Association
article.*



Our best patients are referred by our best patients. Thank you!

The high cost of NOT seeking

DENTAL CARE

*“My teeth don’t hurt,
so why should I go to the dentist?”*

*“I can’t afford to go to the dentist unless I have
a toothache, so I’ll only go if I’m in pain.”*



Some things in life are not replaceable. Sure, there are dentures and implants, but neither of those will ever be quite the same as keeping the teeth you were born with. It’s easy to forget your teeth.

After all, if they’re doing the job they’re supposed to do and not hurting you, why bother with them?

Well, to begin with, taking care of your teeth *now* can mean that they’ll be there for many years to come. Having regular checkups and cleanings can help keep small problems from becoming major ones. Problems such as small cavities and gingivitis need to be caught early to prevent tooth loss down the road.

Even if you’re scrupulous about your home care, you still can’t remove all the tartar that has built up on your teeth. Our office can give you a professional cleaning and examination that completes the good home care you’re practicing every day.

If you have financial concerns or aren’t sure about your insurance coverage, talk to us. We’ll be happy to look over your insurance booklet or discuss payment plans that can help you afford the care you need.

If you have not been to our office for two years or more, we urge you to call immediately in order to schedule an appointment for a dental cleaning and examination. We’ll be happy to hear from you, because that will mean you believe in the wisdom of investment spending for your dental health!



Can you inherit bad teeth?

Dental-health problems do seem to run in families, but heredity is only one factor in determining dental health. In families in which poor oral health is a continuing problem, it isn’t always clear whether the situation is caused by heredity, diet, or lack of good home care. When heredity does seem to be a strong influence, it is even more important to begin practicing good oral hygiene at a young age.

Even before a child learns to brush his or her own teeth, his or her taste buds are showing preferences. The food you give your child on a regular basis will help determine whether he or she makes good dietary choices as an adult. Keep foods high in sugar or acid to a minimum. These include candy, sodas, cookies, and cakes. Some natural sugars, such as maple or honey, are no better, so use them sparingly as well. Avoid sweets that stick to teeth. Discourage unhealthy snacking; choose fresh fruit for between-meal nourishment.

Fluoride is another essential ingredient in creating healthy teeth.

In situations in which fluoride isn’t available through drinking water, tablets or drops can be administered. The ability of fluoride to prevent decay has been proven, and this added protection can help children avoid cavities for years to come.

As a child begins to start caring for his or her own teeth, it’s necessary to remember that during this time, habits will be developed that can last a lifetime. A child should be given his or her own brush with about a pea-sized dollop of paste. Demonstrate brushing and then let him or her try. Supervise the brushing until you feel the child is old enough to do a proper job. Set a good example by brushing your own teeth at the same time. Be sure that all tooth surfaces are clean. Floss the teeth until the child is old enough to accomplish this task alone.

We can suggest other ways to help grow strong, healthy teeth, whether heredity is a factor or not. Together, we can help your child have a healthy dental future.

HEALTHY ALL OVER

There's new evidence showing that your emotional state may have a marked effect on your immune system. For instance, excessive anger or stress can weaken the immune system and provide an opportunity for viruses and other ailments to attack. A compromised immune system may be a factor in conditions such as diabetes, asthma attacks, blood clots, the common cold, the flu, and periodontal disease.



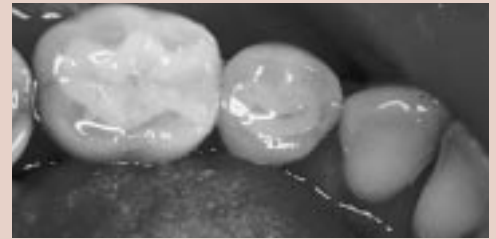
So what does this have to do with your teeth? Plenty. Periodontal disease, which is caused by bacteria, is one of the most common infections in America today. Lowered resistance in the immune system may enable periodontal disease to gain a foothold, and without proper oral hygiene and treatment, you could lose teeth. You may notice that signs of gingivitis are more rampant when you are under stress. This is a sign to take

extra-good care of your teeth.

Several emotional factors can affect the immune system. Anger or anxiety that continues and becomes chronic is far more dangerous than shorter episodes. Anger actually reduces the ability of your heart to pump blood efficiently. Anxiety can be a contributor to the onset of sickness as well as lengthening the recovery period.

Being isolated socially—as often is the case with depression—may be as dangerous as smoking or obesity.

Staying healthy all over is a worthy goal. It means caring for yourself both physically and emotionally. We encourage you to focus on ways to improve your overall physical condition. This involves learning how to manage anger or stress, exercising regularly, eating a well-balanced diet, and, of course, practicing good oral hygiene at home and visiting us regularly.



SOME THINGS ARE FOREVER

Diamonds. Eternity. Some great loves. Dental fillings. Well, three out of four isn't bad. Dental fillings do not last forever. Oh, some may last up to 20 years, but chances are very good that any filling you have in your mouth is going to have to be replaced at some point.

Certain filling materials last longer than others. Composite resins may last up to 10 years. Glass ionomers as many as 5. Amalgam and gold fillings as long as 25 years. Of course, these are only ranges, so any one filling may not last as long, or may last longer.

How long a filling lasts depends upon more than the material from which it is made. The location and size of the restoration are also critical. For instance, composite fillings on front teeth tend to last longer than those located on molars. Oftentimes, teeth with large fillings will need crowns at some point.

There are things you can do to help your fillings last longer. These include...

- practicing good oral hygiene at home (*daily flossing and brushing after meals*).
- having regular checkups with us.
- using a dental rinse that contains fluoride.
- reducing the amount of sugar in your diet.
- chewing gum that is sugar-free, or not chewing at all.

During your regular examinations, we inspect your fillings to see how they are faring. If necessary, we'll take x-rays to be sure they aren't in need of replacement. However, when the time comes, we'll be ready to do a new restoration to help protect your tooth structure and save your tooth.

VEGETARIAN?

Most adults who have made the commitment to vegetarianism are well educated about nutrition. They know that it's necessary for them to consume certain foods or take vitamins to obtain all the necessary nutrients. However, this may not be the case with teens or young adults who have chosen a vegetarian lifestyle without researching all the facts.

Maintaining a strictly vegetarian diet that includes no animal products whatsoever can lead to deficiencies in certain vitamins. Calcium and vitamin D should be supplemented in some way in these diets. Lack of these vitamins in adults can increase the likelihood of developing periodontal disease. In teens and younger

children, the teeth may actually soften. Green, leafy vegetables, cod liver oil, and nutritional yeast can help to make up for these deficiencies. In addition, getting plenty of sunshine encourages the body to produce vitamin D.

Your diet is very important to your dental health. The things you put into your mouth not only affect your teeth while you are chewing, but also in their ability to contribute to the body's nutritional needs. When we ask about your medical history, please let us know if you are on any type of special diet. We can help you be sure you're getting all the essential nutrients you need to keep your teeth healthy and strong.

Catherine L. Forster, D.D.S.

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Here's your dental newsletter!

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Use it before you lose it

This might be called a “Dental Insurance Alert.” About 90 percent of all dental insurance is based upon a calendar year (January to December). If you do not utilize your dental benefits within the calendar year, those benefits are gone forever as of December 31.

The potential loss of benefits can be anywhere from \$750 to \$2,500, depending on your type of insurance. And these benefits were paid for by you either directly or through salary deductions.

If you are in need of dental care, be aware that 2004 is rapidly coming to an end. You should utilize your 2004 benefits before you lose them. Should you need extensive treatment, this is the last opportunity we will have to combine your 2004 and 2005 benefits to maximize your total return.

Dental insurance is your benefit. You have earned it...so why lose it? Please feel free to call our office for additional information.

Like you never had a filling

That’s how composites look in your teeth—like you never needed a restoration at all. This alternative to amalgam fillings, which have a dark gray or silvery appearance, is becoming a very popular choice. Often, **Dr. Forster** prefers them because they don’t weaken a tooth like amalgam fillings do.

Composite fillings are formed by combining tooth-colored particles with silicon dioxide to form a resin that looks and feels like a real tooth. Although they were once used only for small fillings and restorations to front teeth, today’s resins are strong enough for use on back teeth.

Composites hold well to the natural tooth and provide insulation to changes in temperature. They are strong and durable as well. Best of all, there’s no “metal mouth” look when you talk, smile, or eat. Composites take a little longer to place, but they can still be done in a single visit.

Choosing composite fillings exclusively can leave the impression that you’ve never had a filling at all. Instead, you maintain a beautiful, natural-looking smile. Only your dentist will know for sure whether your teeth have been restored.



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Office Hours

Our regular hours are
7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Appointment and Emergency

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