



DENTAL HEALTH LETTER

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

Fall 2007

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Why do I need an oral physical?

An oral physical is important for those of us who want to keep our teeth for a lifetime and have had changes in our mouths. You are probably aware of changes in your body over the last few years. Well, you may not know it yet, but your mouth and teeth have changed too! That is why we reevaluate your dental health every three to seven years.

Medical and dental advances take place constantly. Your physician updates your medical records with a physical exam or various tests. Baseline readings are taken of your blood pressure, pulse, cholesterol, weight, blood work, etc. These are used to determine what may be considered normal for you, to detect problems, or provide a baseline for any changes that occur in the future.

Just like your general medical health, your teeth, gums, bite, and oral health change too! We know more today about how to PREVENT and detect dental disease than we did several years ago. A periodic charting update is important if it has been three to five years or more since you last had one. Existing conditions of your periodontal health (recession, pockets, bone loss), bite (cracked, shifted, or loose teeth), jaw function, and defective or weak fillings will be charted. In addition, if your gums bleed when you brush, that means bacteria and toxins are entering your bloodstream.

I firmly believe in prevention. If you want your teeth to last as long as you do, don't just hope for the best. Start planning now to be sure you will keep your teeth for a lifetime. The wear and tear of time often show up in your teeth, jaws, bite, and gums before YOU can feel it. These changes, if detected early, can be addressed. PREVENTION refers to finding and dealing with any changes or problems that occur BEFORE you are forced to by pain, or by broken or loose teeth.

If necessary, after we update your dental charting and records, I will have a personal consultation visit with you. I will make you aware of immediate concerns, if any, and treatment options. Future and long-term considerations of prevention will also be discussed to outline a plan to help you keep your teeth healthy for your lifetime; I am looking forward to it.

Dr. Catherine L. Forster ☺

Just like your general medical health, your teeth, gums, bite, and oral health change too!

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



Preventing oral cancer

Oral cancer affects about 30,000 people each year, and almost a third that many will die annually of the disease. It is diagnosed more often in men than in women. The good news is that the number of oral cancers diagnosed is slowly declining.

What can be done to further impede the progress of this deadly cancer? An important element is discouraging tobacco use. A very large percentage of those diagnosed with oral cancer are tobacco users. Other factors associated with oral cancer are alcohol use and exposure to UV rays.

Knowing the symptoms of oral cancer means detecting it earlier, when the chances for a cure are best. The most common symptoms include a sore in the mouth that refuses to heal, pain in the mouth, a lump in the mouth, or discoloration

of oral tissue. Changes in the voice, trouble swallowing, a feeling that something is stuck in the throat, and a continual sore throat may also be signs. Swelling or discomfort of the teeth or jaw, looseness of the teeth, and numbness in the tongue or other oral tissues can all be symptoms as well.

Although it's good to know the signs of oral cancer, it's even better to visit us for regular oral-cancer checks at the same time we clean your teeth. We have the expertise to detect oral cancer early. Don't let this killer get the edge on you. See us for regular oral-cancer screenings.

Another reason to defeat gum disease

Gum, or periodontal, disease is an infection of the gums and periodontal pockets between the gums and the teeth. Periodontal disease is suspected to affect about half of all adults over the age of 35.

Left untreated, gum disease can destroy supporting bone and ligaments, which can result in tooth loss.

As if this weren't enough, a number of other health problems have been associated with gum disease. They include:

- cardiovascular disease
- low-birthweight infants
- diabetes
- respiratory disease
- pancreatic cancer

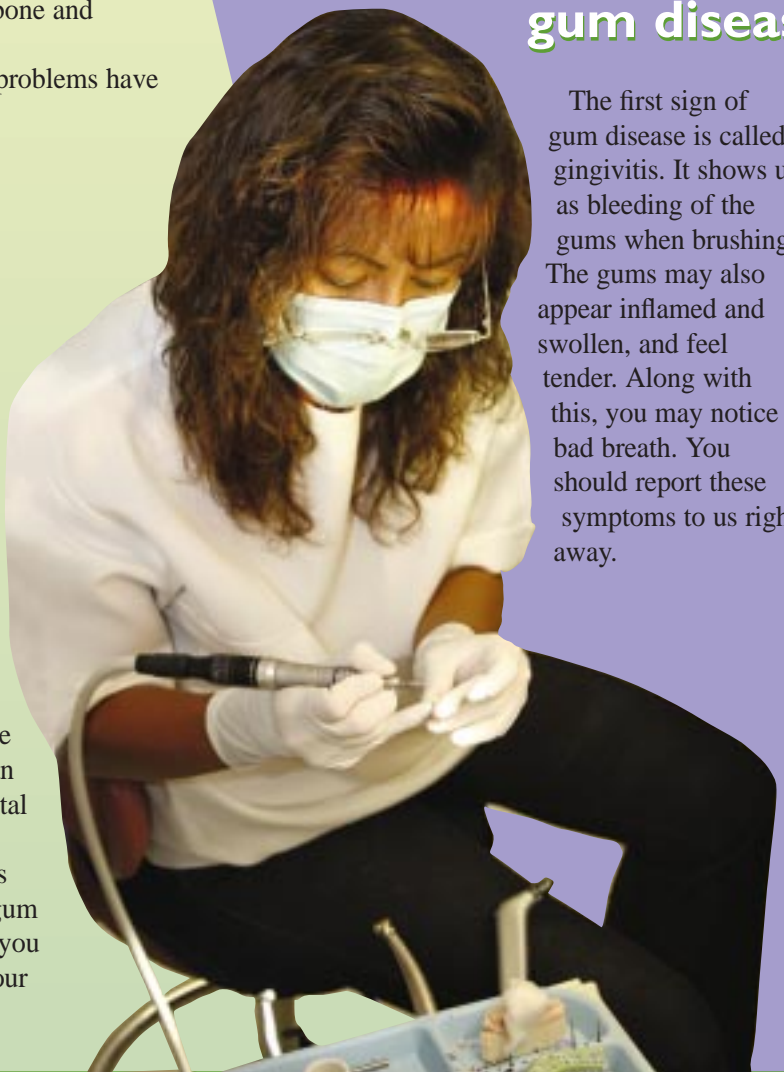
All these links are still being studied. The most recent association—to pancreatic cancer—has only recently come to light. The study that uncovered this association involved 50,000 men. Researchers found that the risk of pancreatic cancer was higher for those who also had periodontal disease. However, both pancreatic cancer and tobacco use are linked to periodontal disease, so there's a possibility that smokers are simply more likely to develop both problems.

More research is obviously necessary to establish the exact nature of the link between these two diseases. What is clear, however, is that a healthier mouth may be associated with a healthier body. Periodontal disease can often be treated successfully with a combination of dental and home care.

Knowing the signs of periodontal disease can help as well. See us if you experience any early symptoms of gum disease. The sooner we begin treatment, the less likely you are to lose teeth, and the more likely you are to keep your mouth healthy.

Warning signs of gum disease

The first sign of gum disease is called gingivitis. It shows up as bleeding of the gums when brushing. The gums may also appear inflamed and swollen, and feel tender. Along with this, you may notice bad breath. You should report these symptoms to us right away.





What those tiny cracks in your teeth might tell us

Could engineering methods used to determine the safety of engines also be utilized to diagnose the stability of a tooth?

A system known as the Kitagawa-Takahashi diagram is employed to help engineers discover whether a small crack in an engine can eventually lead to failure of that piece of equipment. Now there's consideration as to whether that same technology could be applied to the integrity of a tooth.

Very tiny cracks in tooth enamel are common. However, it hasn't been possible to tell from examination of those cracks whether the tooth will eventually give way under pressure. Engineers have ways of understanding cracks in metal that may have applications for dentists.

Engineers believe that by using a 3-D image of a tooth, they may be able to help dentists determine when preventive treatment could be employed to avoid a break later on. The idea is to take technology that's employed on a large scale—say, with a jet airplane engine—and make it applicable to something as small as a tooth. This research shows great promise, but it's not yet ready for use in our offices. We'll keep watching to see if this technology could some day benefit our patients.

IMPORTANT "firsts"

First smile...first tooth...first dental visit—a baby's first year is full of...well, "firsts." The very first visit to the dentist stands out, though, for an important reason: it sets the stage for a child's dental health for life. You see, that first visit begins to teach the child that dental health is important. It's one of the essential steps in starting him or her off to a life of good dental care and good dental health.

Preparing your child for the first visit with us should involve talking to him or her about what to expect. Let him or her know that sitting still and being cooperative will

be valued. Be prepared to complete a form detailing his or her medical history as well. A first visit generally includes examining and counting the teeth. We'll also look at the bite and check the health and development of the oral tissues. If we see any potential problems, we'll discuss them with you at that time.

The other essential part of growing healthy teeth is good home care. This begins with cleaning the baby's gums after feedings with a clean, damp washcloth. When the first teeth arrive, brushing them with a soft brush and a tiny bit of fluoride paste is recommended. Never put a child to sleep with a bottle of anything but plain water. Baby-bottle tooth decay is a very real problem that can wreak havoc with a child's first teeth. Instead, encourage your child to begin brushing after every meal by doing this for him or her and allowing your child to do it when he or she is ready.



Bad breaks

Teeth are made of tough stuff. In fact, teeth are among the hardest parts of the body. They are not, however, indestructible. Breaks in teeth can range from the hardly noticeable to the downright painful. Whether you're experiencing pain or not, a trip to our office is in order.

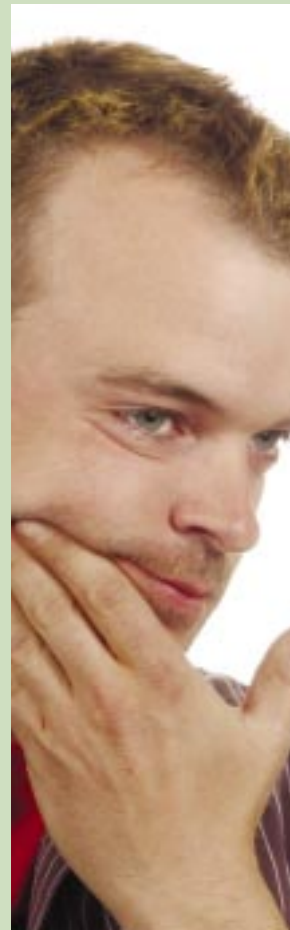
From bad to worse

Any break in a tooth is bad, but some are worse than others. **Bad**—It's possible to chip the enamel of a tooth and not realize you've done it. When you do discover the chip, however, give us a call and have it checked out. Left untreated, the tooth is a target for decay.

Worse—A break that exposes the dentin of the tooth will be sensitive to cold. This degree of break probably won't go unnoticed. Again, call our office and describe your symptoms.

Dental emergency—A break that reaches the pulp of the tooth is going to result in extreme pain and maybe bleeding. You've got a dental emergency. Seek treatment without delay.

Treatments for broken teeth range from smoothing the area and restoring it, to covering the pulp with a material that will retain the integrity of the tooth until a crown can be put on. In some cases, these teeth may require root-canal therapy or even extraction. Any tooth break requires dental investigation. Don't delay in contacting us when a break occurs.



Catherine L. Forster, D.D.S., Inc.

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The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for dental advice. For your specific information, be sure to consult our office.

Are you clenching?

Clenching your jaw excessively when you are stressed or during sleep isn't normal. In fact, it can damage teeth and lead to headaches and jaw problems. However, for many people, this habit is so entrenched in their lives, they no longer realize they are clamping.



The technical term for clenching and grinding your teeth is bruxism. Untreated, bruxism can wear and break teeth, cause hypersensitivity of the teeth to hot and cold, and even loosen teeth. In addition, headaches and jaw pain can result.

Don't wait until bruxism takes a toll on your mouth and your life. Come to us for a diagnosis and the treatment that could ward off the pain before it starts. If you find yourself clenching or grinding, give us a call. We'd like to help you avoid the problems associated with this condition.

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 2007 is rapidly coming to an end. You should utilize your 2007 benefits before you lose them. Should you need extensive treatment, this is the last opportunity we will have to combine your 2007 and 2008 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.

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Office Hours

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

**Appointment and Emergency
Phone: (330) 492-7889**

Web site:
www.cantonsmiles.com

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