

The Reality of "Teeth Cleanings" and How to Effectively Change an Oral Environment

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Are Two Times a Year Enough?

Teeth cleanings have been a standard procedure in dentistry for the prevention and treatment of periodontal (gum) disease and tooth decay. They are usually performed twice per year. Their purpose is to remove both the hard deposits on teeth (calculus/tartar) that can't be removed by usual self-care methods and the soft material called "plaque" that is not removed by the patient and eventually turns into calculus/tartar. While it is important to remove calculus because it is full of damaging bacteria, the truth is that the main cause of periodontal disease is not the hard stuff, but the bacterial plaque itself. It causes an inflammatory response, resulting in the gum tissue adjacent to the teeth actually losing its skin, thus compromising the teeth-gum junction that is the main bodily gateway that keeps bad oral bacteria from entering our entire bodily system.

Leaky Gums become a Sieve

Because of this, "leaky gums" from periodontal disease is not only damaging in the mouth, but to overall health as well - and unlike a toothache, it rarely causes pain. Focusing on removing the soft plaque and hard material twice or more a year may not be enough for most people to maintain a safe level of oral health and prevent bad breath. It is a proven fact that the bacteria that cause gum disease constantly emit volatile sulfur compounds (VSC's), which is the main cause of bad breath.

The Reality of Oral "Bugs"

The significance of oral biofilm (bacterial plaque) in relationship to general health is being brought more and more to light these days, as research continues to show that oral bacteria are related to many health conditions. Recent groundbreaking research in the American Heart Association Journal shows the direct connection between oral bacteria associated with periodontal disease and acute heart attacks. The research tells us that as many as half of heart attacks are being triggered by oral pathogens (bad bacteria) found in dental infections (periodontal disease; dental decay; root canals) and are associated with the development of acute coronary thrombosis. Oral bacteria were found in every thrombus (clot), and 30% had live oral pathogens in the clot (Circulation March, 2013).

Similar findings were cited in the American Heart Association Stroke Journal, which cited similar results regarding clots in blood vessels that cause strokes (Stroke, February 2013). It is also a known fact that there is a reciprocal relationship between gums, diabetes and pre-diabetes. These conditions make the gums more vulnerable to poor gum health, and inflamed gums cause a rise in blood sugar and cholesterol.

Why a Dental Wellness Center?

The above-mentioned facts support the foundation of The Dental Wellness Center and the emphasis that it places on first assessing the specific type of bacteria that exist in the patients' mouths rather than just cleaning off plaque and tartar twice a year, which is a "shotgun" approach. It is a fact that nine out of ten new patients entering the Wellness Center have gums that bleed upon standard gum measuring. More than half of these patients had been receiving periodical cleanings! Somehow, somewhere along the way, patients aren't getting the proper information and care that is fundamental to developing a healthy oral environment.

Things to consider in the development of a healthy oral environment:

* **pH testing** pH is a numeric scale that indicates the relative acidity - alkalinity of the mouth, which is reflective of the entire body. Neither decay nor gum disease can thrive in a neutral or slightly alkaline oral environment. A majority of the Wellness Center's new patients have an acidic oral environment.

* **Oral Biofilm testing** Bacterial plaque samples are taken from between the teeth and gums, cheeks and tongue and sent to a laboratory for analysis. There are over 700 species of oral bacteria, some of which are not only damaging to the teeth and gums, but as indicated, can travel to other areas of the body.

* **Proper nutrition/supplementation** The body needs to receive proper nutritional support for the maintenance of a healthy immune system. The United States Department of Agriculture states that 9 out of 10 Americans are deficient in potassium; 8 out of 10 are deficient in vitamin E; 7 out of 10 are deficient in calcium; 50% are deficient in vitamin A, vitamin C, and magnesium. These nutrients are needed to maintain both general and oral health. Without these nutrients as part of a plan to help patients who are nutritionally deficient, how can any dentist expect a patient to heal and stay healthy? This is especially true for those patients undergoing extensive dental treatment, as they tend to eat soft, less nutritious foods when recovering from dental treatment. The Wellness Center offers scientifically tested nutraceuticals that support the body's immune system, as shown by actual double blind studies.*

* **Effective self-care coaching** One in fifty new patients relate that they have actually been coached** in daily oral self care, mainly having been given lip service, perhaps shown how to brush and floss on mouth models if they are lucky.

These are some aspects that distinguish a Dental Wellness Center, which focuses primarily on patient education and diagnosing the causes of dental problems, rather than mainly treating their results. Through the years, it has been discovered that most of the Wellness Center's new patients' dental problems stem from what they don't know about their mouths, simply because they haven't been properly taught.

Real Differences That Challenge Assumptions

While teeth cleanings are still an important aspect of oral health, they are only a singular component of developing and maintaining a healthy oral environment. Gums that bleed upon measuring are simply not healthy. In order to halt the bleeding to shore up the main bacterial gateway into other bodily systems, it is essential to know beforehand how many gum pockets and bleeding areas there are, as well as the amount and type of oral bacteria causing it and the pH of the environment that they are living in.

Our assessment information provides us with tools used in the development of individualized treatment plans that not only stop the bleeding, but improve our patients' general health. These plans include cleaning the teeth along with the use of mouth rinses developed to deal the specific bacteria cited in the lab tests, as well as providing proper nutritional supplementation and effective self-care coaching. Cleaning teeth twice or even four times a year alone might be like washing a car with some underlying areas of rusted out metal - it may look good and feel better to drive for awhile, but it won't solve the continuing underlying problem. This is why we don't clean teeth immediately as a first step.

The information we gain through your medical and dental histories, along with the various assessments made along the route to learning about your oral and general health, leads to preventive and treatment processes that address your unique situation. You will become healthier, both orally and overall - and most importantly, you will know the reasons why.

* <https://pharmaden.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/pharmaden-reasearch.pdf>

****Coach: "A method of directing, instructing and training a person with the aim to achieve some goal or develop specific skills."**