

The Dentist Interview

It is well known among dentists that the most frequently missed dental appointment is the very first one – the new patient examination (See “The First Appointment” article below). This is unfortunate because the first appointment is so vital; it sets the stage for dental success. It is dedicated quality time between the doctor and patient, a chance to get to know one another to discuss patient dental concerns and to set goals to resolve those concerns.

Our Dental Wellness Center philosophy differs from traditional dental practice in that we concern ourselves with the causes of dental distress rather than just repairing or replacing broken teeth and making them look better. There is a vast distinction between these two views, and it determines the nature and progression of time spent during dental appointments.

A ‘wellness’ view holds as most important, the relationship between the doctor and patient. Therefore, unless there is a need for immediate pain relief, the beginning appointments are dedicated to learning about the new patient’s dental and medical histories and their desires for their dental future. This is why the initial interview is so very important. It allows for an educational process for both patient and doctor. I have discovered that this is a unique experience for new patients. Rarely has a new patient told me that another dentist has taken the time to do this.

Traditional dental practices concern themselves mainly with checking and cleaning teeth and recommending treatments to fix, replace them or improve their appearance. They leave out one critical aspect however, of the whole dental treatment process that the ‘wellness’ concept does not: viewing the mouth as part of a whole bodily system. Yes it is about teeth and gums, but it is also about the connection between teeth, gums, jaw joints, chewing, and the state of one’s overall health!

I understand why most people expect to have things done to their teeth right away when they first come in, but I also know that this approach to dental care is what has created many dental problems in the first place. Time was never allotted to do a complete oral diagnosis, and the concentration was more on repairing teeth, rather than finding the causes of dental problems, much less seeing how all this related to the person’s general health.

So, you can see why we value the first appointment, as it allows both the care giver and recipient a chance to discuss what’s important to them and to plan for a future of oral health, rather than just to keep “fixing it” until the next trouble develops.