

Robert B. Gerber, DDS  
Tower Dental Group  
Tower Dental Implant Center

# NEWS

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Tower Dental Group  
Robert B. Gerber, DDS,  
Director

Telephone  
(310) 652-0450

FAX  
(310) 652-0458

email  
rbgdds@aol.com

Cedars-Sinai  
Medical Towers  
8631 West Third Street  
Suite 730-East  
Los Angeles,  
California 90048-5911

Lila  
Dental Hygienist

Narine  
Dental Hygienist

Yelena  
Dental Hygienist

Lissett  
Treatment Coordinator

Karen  
Administrative Assistant

Marjorie  
Dental Assistant

## 5 GOOD REASONS...

### WHY YOU NEED ORAL EXAMINATIONS AND DENTAL PROPHYLAXIS

You may wonder why oral examinations and dental prophylaxis are necessary when you visit the dentist. You may also wonder what the dentist is looking for or what an exam entails. Here is some general information that will help you become more informed about the importance of oral exams and dental prophylaxis to your health care.

The purpose of a dental examination is to gather information about your oral health. The extent of the examination you receive depends upon a number of factors, including whether you are a new or returning patient, the length of time since your last visit, and whether you are returning to have a specific condition checked.

#### 1. Your teeth

Checking for dental decay and defective dental restorations is an important part of an oral exam. We will check for signs of decay, including secondary decay around old fillings or crowns and on the root surfaces of tooth roots that become exposed because of gum recession or periodontal (gum) disease. If you wear complete or partial dentures, it's important to periodically check them for proper fit. Although they were made to fit precisely, dentures can become loose due to naturally occurring changes in your gums and bones.

#### 2. Dental prophylaxis and periodontal health

Given the potential links between the bacteria that cause gum disease and systemic diseases, prevention of periodontal disease is an important step in maintaining overall health. Periodontal (gum) disease affects three out of four adults at some time in their lives. It doesn't necessarily hurt, and you may not even be aware that you have it until an advanced stage. Regular dental visits and

periodic dental prophylaxis (cleanings) are essential for the prevention and early detection of periodontal disease. If detected early, periodontal disease can often be reversed before the gums and the supporting bone are irreversibly damaged.

#### 3. Cancer screening

During your dental examination, we look for precancerous changes in the oral tissues. Early detection of cancer is essential for the most successful treatment and cure rate. If oral cancer is not found early, tumors may grow deep into local tissues and spread to lymph glands in the neck. When tumors invade the lymph glands, there is less chance for effective treatment. We check for lumps, masses, growths, red or white patches, ulcerations, and recurring sore areas.

#### 4. Systemic health

Oral health is integrally connected with your general health. Regular checkups are important because some diseases or medical conditions have signs that can appear in the mouth. Diabetes, nutritional and vitamin deficiencies, and hormonal irregularities are some examples.

#### 5. Changes in your health

Be sure to let us know if you have any **illnesses, medical conditions, or allergies**, and if your health status has changed since your last visit to our office. Tell us what **medications** you are taking, and their dosages and frequency (both prescription and non-prescription medications, vitamins, and herbal products). Also tell us if you have **allergies** or have experienced **hypersensitivity reactions** to any medications.

*By scheduling regular dental visits, you can help keep your mouth healthy throughout your lifetime.*

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