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Tower Dental Group
Tower Dental Implant Center

NEWS

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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.

Visit our Web site: www.rbgerberdds.com
Thank you for your referrals. We appreciate them!

What happens when you lose a back tooth?

When a back tooth can't be saved by root canal, or the patient refuses to save it and opts to have it removed, the removal of the tooth is not the end of the story. Many people think that, from an aesthetic viewpoint, a back tooth doesn't really matter. However, that is far from the truth.

The loss of a back tooth can have a significant effect on one's appearance. First, the teeth will shift when the missing tooth is no longer available to help support the others. One outer sign of this change inside the mouth is the appearance of pouches on the sides of the jaw. In addition, a sinking or puckering may become obvious in the area between the cheeks and the mouth. Lips may come to look thinner and straighter across the face rather than turning up in a natural arc. All these changes can have a drastic effect on the patient's appearance—especially as he or she ages.

Fortunately, this doesn't have to occur. Often, a root canal can save the tooth in question, avoiding these problems completely. However, if a root canal isn't possible, a bridge can be used to keep the teeth functioning properly and maintain their stability. A fixed bridge helps retain the patient's natural bite, prevents drifting of the teeth, delays the occurrence of periodontal disease, and keeps the surrounding teeth in their natural positions. In some cases, implants may be the treatment of choice. In addition to all this, the cosmetic changes that might have appeared if the space had been left unfilled won't occur. We think that will leave you looking better and smiling more brightly for a long time to come.



Some people neglect to visit us because they have healthy teeth. They think to themselves, *"My teeth are in good shape...I keep them clean... maybe I'll go in once in a while for a cleaning, but I don't need regularly scheduled checkups, right?"*

Regular appointments with us are about more than just clean teeth. For instance, when you visit us, we always check for signs of oral cancer. Finding a precancerous lesion early on can mean preventing full-blown oral cancer. In fact, about ten percent of patients exhibit suspicious lesions that could be oral cancer. This disease often appears as a small spot in the mouth. It is generally painless, flat, and may be red or white. If the spot looks the least bit suspicious, a

painless brush biopsy is performed to discover whether any cancerous cells are present. In a very small number of cases, a scalpel biopsy may need to be done using local anesthesia.

In addition to seeing us for regular oral cancer checks, you can help to prevent oral cancer by avoiding substances that are known to cause the disease. These include tobacco (cigars, cigarettes, pipes, and chewing tobacco) and alcohol. Avoid excessive sun exposure as well, since this may be a factor in lip cancer. Watch for signs such as changes in color inside your mouth, tenderness, changes in your bite alignment, lumps, rough spots, or sores that don't heal. Report anything unusual to us.

Feelin' dry?

Some medications can make your mouth feel like a desert. Whether it's blood-pressure drugs, anti-histamines, or antidepressants, that cotton-mouth feeling can be miserable. In addition to how it makes you feel, it also can increase the likelihood of developing a cavity. How can you whet your whistle and save your teeth?

Whatever you do, don't reach for the hard candies. Sure, they'll increase saliva production, but they'll also get those bacteria working away to produce the acids that can break down enamel. Instead, grab a glass of water or a bottle to take with you. Sip all you want. If that doesn't do the trick, rinsing your mouth with water can sometimes provide relief. Occasionally, reach for a sugarless hard candy. This combination of remedies should do the trick to keep your mouth watering and hold bacteria at bay.



Great expectations

Dental care for mothers in waiting

When a woman becomes pregnant, she will be concerned about a number of changes occurring in her body. Chances are good that her teeth will be way down on the list, and the changes that arise in her dental health will probably surprise her. However, pregnant women have special dental needs they should be aware of.

For instance, a problem called pregnancy gingivitis shows up in most pregnant women. It's caused by increases in hormones that change blood flow throughout her system. The gums may become puffy and bleed easily. Scrupulous home care can help relieve this phenomenon, which means brushing after each meal and flossing every day to reduce plaque buildup. Antiplaque and fluoride rinses may be recommended as well.

Acids from morning sickness (which may occur throughout the day) can erode the enamel that protects teeth. Rinsing with baking soda and water right after an episode of sickness can help neutralize this acid. If you don't have baking soda available, rinse well with plain water.

Pregnancy tumors may affect some women. Often, these occur when gums are tender from pregnancy gingivitis. These benign growths normally resolve themselves. However, it's important to be aware that they can erupt. Sometimes they interfere with eating or are in uncomfortable spots. When this is the situation, removal may be recommended.

The need for some dental procedures and treatments may be questioned during pregnancy. For example, x-rays will be performed only if there is an emergency. Elective procedures will be postponed until the second or third trimester, or after delivery. Procedures that cannot wait will be scheduled for the middle trimester if at all possible.

We are prepared to handle the special needs of our pregnant patients. We share your excitement as you look forward to the blessed event, and we are eager to have the opportunity to assist you in raising a cavity-free child. If you have any questions about pregnancy and your dental health, don't hesitate to ask.



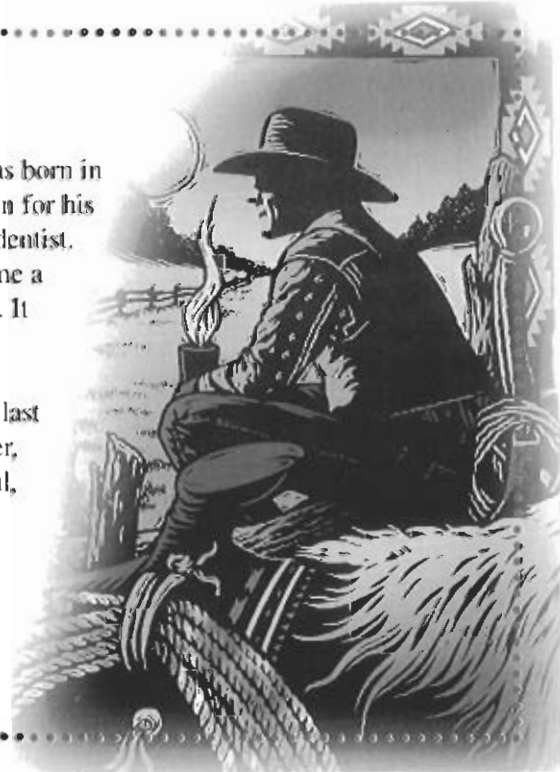
"I'll take 'Famous Dentists' for \$200"

Zane Grey, once the highest-paid writer in the world, was first a dentist. He was born in 1872 and given the name Pearl Zane Gray. The successful author, best known for his colorful westerns, was the son of an Ohio farmer, preacher, and (you guessed it) dentist.

Zane's dad longed for his son to follow in his footsteps, but first the boy became a crack baseball player who scored a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania. It was there that he first wrote a story about fishing that appeared in *Recreation Magazine*.

After college, Grey (he dropped his first name and changed the spelling of his last name in 1902) began practicing dentistry in New York City. His practice, however, was short-lived. By 1903, he had self-published his first book. It was unsuccessful, but Grey was not easily defeated.

The erstwhile baseball player and dentist went on to publish more than 80 books. Later, he was to see many of his stories come to life in *Zane Grey Theater*. There is a museum that honors him in his hometown of Zanesville, Ohio, and he appeared on a postage stamp in 1972. Quite a famous ending for a man who began his career as a dentist from Ohio.



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Dental care for California's soldiers

The California Dental Association announced in the January 2005 issue of the "CDA Update" newsletter that "...nearly 100 state dentists have agreed to provide dental care to California National Guard soldiers." Dr. Gerber, during his tenure as president of the Beverly Hills Academy of Dentistry in 2004, was active in encouraging Academy members to join him in participating in the volunteer effort to prepare National Guard soldiers for deployment in Iraq.

These volunteer dentists will be a referral source for mobilizing soldiers who need expedient dental care and will be treated in the dentists' private offices. National Guard members are not eligible to receive dental treatment or have access to services at federal military bases until called to active duty. However, when soldiers are called to duty, they are rushed to complete dental treatments and risk having teeth extracted rather than repaired in order to deploy with their units.

Approximately 25 percent of soldiers called to active duty are considered nondeployable because they require urgent dental treatment or run the high risk of suffering dental emergencies within 12 months.

The California Dental Association is the first state dental association in the nation to take action in developing this service to assist the "citizen soldiers" who currently fulfill more than 50 percent of the demand for combat forces. The dental profession is proud to support our troops in the field.

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