

Teeth are meant to last a lifetime

By John Hackbarth, DDS

Of the three basic problems one can have with their teeth, two are infections. The third is the way the teeth fit and work together.

Today, I am going to discuss the infections. Decay eats up and destroys teeth. Gum disease infects the gum tissues and can eat up the bone surrounding the teeth. Both decay and gum disease can spread infection all over the body.

If food debris is allowed to stay on the teeth for days, then bacteria can flourish and destroy both the teeth, gums and bone. These disease processes are slow and progressive. They are non-painful until it is too late.

Whether you are 6 months old or 90 years old, clean teeth and gums do not rot.

Starting with infants, a baby should have their mouth swabbed with a damp towel after they eat. This will start creating the lifelong habit of cleaning their mouth. As the teeth come in, the parents should go from the towel to a child toothbrush. Brush their teeth after each meal. Toothpaste is not necessary.

Toothpaste is only good for the flavor and for making brushing more pleasant. The key is to get all the food particles and residual bacteria off the teeth and gums.

Children should visit the dentist by their first birthday. Mom or dad should bring them so they can begin to feel comfortable in the dental office environment and have a positive experience.

Too often parents wait until the child has a toothache before they take them to the dentist. This usually involves treatment and shots, so the dentist can treat the cause of the pain. It is often a very traumatic first experience for a child and can set up a life long fear of going to the dentist. I'm sure many of you can relate.

There are studies that show the children of dentists have very few to zero cavities during their lifetimes. This is not because the child has access to dental care, but because the parents are adamant about their children keep their teeth clean at home. This is something every parent can do.

The transition from baby teeth to adult teeth starts around 6 years old and lasts to around 12 years old.

If the teeth are kept perfectly clean, then there will be no decay. Of course, there are always exceptions.

The more dental work you have, the harder it is to keep your teeth clean. Natural teeth are the easiest to clean, but that can be more difficult if the teeth are crooked or crowded. Your hygienist should be your hygiene coach for the needs for your specific conditions.

Our office loves seeing children in hygiene, so that we can do thorough evaluations not only for disease but also for proper growth of the jaws. If we find problems that require the care of a specialist, we will refer them to the proper doctors.

The purpose of this article is to educate the public and medical community on dentistry. Dentistry can be confusing both to the lay public and to other health care providers. That is not a good thing. If you have questions, please call my office.