



# Making Me Smile

We're in the business of teeth so it's fair to say we have hundreds of general facts about your teeth and gums. This month we'll be answering 10 of our most frequently asked questions and a few dental facts. We're confident that a better understanding of your teeth and gums will result in better care and prevention of dental problems.

## Harder Than Nails

Did you know the enamel that covers your teeth is the hardest substance in your body. But this doesn't mean that you should try to crack nuts or remove bottle caps with your teeth – they can chip and crack, and teeth are the only parts of the human body that can't repair themselves. Tongue and lip piercings can chip and crack your teeth also. That's why looking after them is so important.

- 1. What is dental plaque....** Plaque is a sticky mix of bacteria and the substances they secrete. Bacteria produce adhesive chemicals, the bacteria then live in this film on the teeth - it's known as a bio film. At first, this slimy layer is fragile and easily removed by tooth brushing. If left alone, plaque build-up gradually hardens, creating tartar or calculus on your teeth.
- 2. How does plaque result in tooth decay....** Bacteria love carbohydrates like sugar. Eating sweets or drinking sugary soft drinks lets sugar stick to our teeth, giving bacteria something to feed on. As the bacteria create a film of plaque, they digest sugar into acid, which damages teeth.
- 3. Why are dental x-rays necessary.....** Dental X-rays help us to visualize diseases of the teeth and surrounding tissue that cannot be seen with a simple oral exam. In addition, X-rays help the dentist find and treat dental problems early in their development, which can potentially save you money, unnecessary discomfort, and maybe even your life.

*The average person spends about 48 seconds per day brushing their teeth, but dentists recommend at least 2 or 3 minutes.*

- 4. What is a dental implant.....** A Dental Implant is a small titanium screw that serves as the replacement for the root portion of a missing natural tooth. Dental implants can be placed in either the upper or lower jaws, the dental implant fuses with the bone and becomes a good anchor for the replacement tooth. Dental implants can be used in solutions for replacing single or multiple missing teeth.
- 5. What age should I bring my child in for an exam....** Good dental care habits start early, we would encourage you to bring your children in for their first dental exam by their 1st birthday. That way we can assist you with advice on the care of their teeth, through cleaning techniques and dietary advice. Tooth decay is preventable, having the knowledge is the first step and implementing the techniques at home is the second.

*The commonly used practice of putting a cap on a toothbrush is actually more detrimental. The moisture entrapped in the cap favors bacterial growth.*

- 6. Can I eat straight after having a filling.....** The materials used these days to restore damaged teeth generally have a fast curing time, which occurs during your appointment. You may see a bright blue light used during your appointment, this is used to light cure filling materials and bonding agents. We do suggest you take care eating after having a filling done as you may have some numbness from having a local anesthetic, this will usually subside after an hour.
- 7. I brush my teeth twice a day and I still have cavities, why.....** It's disappointing when you feel like you're doing all you can to prevent tooth decay and then be advised that you need some new fillings in your teeth. This is when we encourage you to look at other factors like lifestyle, diet, tooth brushing or flossing techniques. It may be something as simple as frequent snacking or sipping on sweetened drinks through the day. Some medications can cause a dry mouth which will increase your risk to dental decay. Also, acid erosion from reflux will greatly affect your teeth. All of these need to be considered and discussed at your regular dental exams.
- 8. Should I brush my teeth straight after every meal....** NO, straight after meals the surfaces of your teeth are 'soft' for a period of time, generally a 30 minute wait time is recommended. Brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste reduces the risk of tooth decay much more than brushing only once a day. Followed by the use of floss to remove plaque between the teeth.

*Red and swollen gums that bleed often after brushing are a warning sign of gum disease.*

- 9. What age will my children's first teeth appear.....** As with all stages of children's development there is great variations at which time teeth will make an appearance. Most infants will get their first lower front tooth around the age of six months, give or take a month or more. By the time they are 3 years of age they will be the happy owners of 20 primary teeth, which you as parents will be responsible for cleaning until they have the manual dexterity to do so themselves, efficiently and routinely. It is important that tooth brushing becomes part of their daily routine from an early age.
- 10. Should I have a dental exam if I wear dentures....** Yes, it's important to check the soft tissues in your mouth on a regular basis and also the fit of your dentures. During your exam we'll be checking for any lesions that appear in your mouth, areas where the denture may be applying uneven pressure and also if the fit of your denture can be improved. Over time without natural teeth you will experience shrinkage of your upper and lower jaw, causing a change in the fit of your denture and your appearance.

**We look forward to hearing from you soon**

# Park Terrace Dental

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