

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q: ARE DENTAL X-RAYS HARMFUL? CAN'T RADIATION BE DANGEROUS FOR THE BODY?

ANSWER: No, with state-of-the-art equipment exposure is minimum. You will be covered with a lead apron and updated units have filters decreasing exposure to negligible levels. One thing to remember is that dental x-rays are never automatically taken. The decision is based on clinical necessity. Express your concerns at your next dental visit and ask your dentist to explain the procedure.

Q: WHY DO WE HAVE TO VISIT THE DENTIST TWICE A YEAR? IF I TAKE CARE OF MY TEETH, SHOULDN'T ONCE A YEAR BE ENOUGH?

ANSWER: The American Dental Association does recommend 2 to 4 visits per year depending on your particular dental health. Even the champion brusher/flosser is not able to remove all deposits on the teeth and below the gum line. Regular preventive oral care is a wise investment and may actually help you save money in the long run. Therefore, seeing your dentist as recommended and adequate oral hygiene will ensure optimal dental health.

Q: WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF MY GUMS BLEED WHEN I BRUSH OR FLOSS?

ANSWER: The bleeding is the first warning sign of gum disease (also called periodontal disease). Gum disease is the number 1 cause of tooth loss. In fact, the ADA estimates that 70-80% of all adults will have it in some form or another. It is caused by plaque, a film of bacteria that forms on the teeth. Because gum disease is painless, you may not know you even have it. However, knowing that bleeding gums are not "normal", make an appointment to see your dentist right away.

Q: IT IS REALLY POSSIBLE TO KEEP MY TEETH AND GUMS HEALTHY FOR A LIFETIME?

ANSWER: The answer is definitely, yes! With routine preventive dental care in combination with excellent oral hygiene, your teeth could be with you for life. Be sure you are visiting your dentist as necessary and are caring for your teeth and gums as recommended.

Q: I HAVE BEEN TOLD I HAVE BAD BREATH. WHAT OVER THE COUNTER PRODUCT CAN I BUY TO PREVENT THIS?

ANSWER: 80% of bad breath (a condition called halitosis) comes from tooth decay, gum disease and bacteria on the tongue. Only about 2% comes from certain stomach conditions. Your best bet is to talk to your dentist about this. A complete examination of the teeth and gums is necessary in order to determine the source.

Q: ARE DRILLS REALLY BECOMING OBSOLETE? I'VE NOW HEARD ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ABOUT LASER AND SAND BLASTERS TO REMOVE DECAY. DO THESE REALLY WORK?

ANSWER: Drills, also known as dental handpieces, are not becoming obsolete but today there are many other good choices as well. The latest dental handpieces are air turbines many of which have fiber optics (for illumination). Techniques and products associated with the use of these instruments have greatly improved over the past few years - and the use of the dental handpiece is still a very safe, effective and efficient way to remove decay. Air Abrasion Units can remove shallow, restricted areas of decay and are helpful for working with children. Lasers work well for soft tissue use, but for removing decay and preparing damaged teeth they are not as effective. With today's technology- most patients can expect little to no discomfort during the use of either a dental handpiece, a Dental Laser and/or an air abrasion unit for removing decay. Discuss with your dentist the best and most effective technique for your individual situation.

Q: MY DENTIST TOLD ME I NEED A ROOT CANAL. WOULDN'T IT BE EASIER TO JUST PULL THE TOOTH?

ANSWER: In reality, quite the opposite is true.. Many patients are unaware of complications that exist following the removal of a natural tooth. Tooth loss can sometimes lead to a domino effect - causing other teeth to protrude or shift. With the latest

techniques, endodontics (root canal therapy) is far more predictable and more comfortable for the patient than ever before. Keeping your natural teeth for a lifetime is generally the safest and best option to consider. With today's techniques - Root Canal Therapy can be a comfortable, safe and effective way of preventing tooth loss - an investment that will help you to save your teeth - and also actually SAVE you money in the end! Speak with your dentist about what makes the most sense for your particular situation.

Q : I DON'T HAVE INSURANCE, SO I HAVEN'T BEEN TO A DENTIST IN A FEW YEARS. NOTHING HURTS SO DO I REALLY NEED A CHECKUP?

ANSWER: Having regular checkups prevents major problems. Unfortunately, many dental problems occur without any warning. Nothing hurts until there is a significant problem. Before you know it, you've got problems. Extensive dental care is often required for patients who delay, postpone and avoid regularly scheduled visits. Prevention is the key to avoiding costly, extensive dental care. Undetected decay, cysts, tumors, and dental abscesses often lie "silently" below the surface - causing no pain or swelling. Why wait for these problems to surface through the onset of a painful experience? See your dentist today to rest assured that you're in excellent dental health!

Q : I CURRENTLY WEAR A FULL UPPER DENTURE. THE SIX TEETH THAT I STILL HAVE ON THE BOTTOM ARE IN BAD SHAPE. I DON'T WANT TO GET THEM PULLED, BECAUSE I'VE HEARD HOW BAD LOWER DENTURES FIT. WHAT CAN I DO?

ANSWER: There are lots of stories out there about the retention or fit of a lower denture. In some cases, maintenance of existing natural teeth can provide support and anchorage for lower dentures. If they are not in good shape, there are other alternatives available. Your dentist can provide you with a complete and thorough examination of your teeth and gums to best determine your options for your dental health.

Q : I'VE CONSIDERED GETTING MY TEETH BLEACHED. DOES BLEACHING REALLY WORK? ALSO, DO THE DRUG STORE BLEACHING KITS WORK AS GOOD AS ONES AVAILABLE THROUGH MY DENTIST?

ANSWER: Teeth Whitening (or bleaching) works extremely well for many patients. As far as the drug store kits go... it might be wise to remember the old cliché - "If it seems too good to be true, it probably is!". Drug store remedies and quick-fix techniques such as "whitening strips" are often "low cost" and "low power" short term solutions to achieving a whiter smile! Consumers report that the drug store whitening products are messier and the results are not as good as desired. Fast acting, safe and noticeable Teeth Whitening uses stronger more powerful ingredients, which require the supervision of a dental professional/expert. Today's dental professionals are trained experts in helping you to achieve a righter/whiter smile! New techniques in dentistry can often allow patients to see amazing results in a period of a few weeks, days and sometimes as little as 1 hour! Call your dentist today to discuss what options might be available for a younger, brighter and whiter smile!

Q : CAN BLEACHING DAMAGE YOUR TEETH?

ANSWER: Professional teeth whitening solutions are safe when properly used. Always use caution when attempting the "bleaching" process without the support and advice of a dental professional. Your dentist should evaluate low cost kits promising quick results. He or She will be able to advise you as to how best to protect yourself and your smile when it comes to "bleaching" your teeth. In most cases, the professional Whitening Process is a very safe and effective means to reaching the results you'd like for a brighter smile. Allow your dentist to guide you towards the best option.

Q : I MUST ADMIT THAT THE ONLY REASON I DON'T GO TO THE DENTIST IS THAT I'M AFRAID. I KNOW I SHOULD MAKE AN APPOINTMENT BUT EVEN IF I DID, I PROBABLY WOULD BE SO ANXIOUS THAT I WOULDN'T SHOW UP. WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR ME?

ANSWER: Just know this, YOU are not alone with your fear/anxiety of dental treatment. Millions of people have fear/anxiety related to dental procedures. Relaxation techniques such as Oral Sedation (safe, mild, effective "sleepy time" medications) are available to help patients to ease anxiety and allow them to "snooze" through the process. We offer Nitrous Oxide ("laughing gas") for our patients to ease their anxiety as well. You'll be able to openly discuss Oral Sedation and Nitrous Oxide options with your Dentist. These procedures have proven to be safe and effective when administered by a dental professional.

Q : THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF TOOTHPASTE ON THE MARKET. DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHAT KIND I USE? AND WHAT ABOUT GRANDMA'S IDEA THAT ALL YOU NEED IS BAKING SODA?

ANSWER: You are right, there are lots of choices on the market today! The truth is that certain toothpaste options may be better for some than for others. Everyone has his or her favorites...and yes; Grandma's idea of baking soda is still in existence today! Today's dentists and dental hygienists often recommend the use of fluoride toothpaste with only mild abrasives. During your next appointment, be sure to talk with your dentist about your best toothpaste options.

Q : WHAT KIND OF TOOTHBRUSH SHOULD I USE?

ANSWER: Choose a toothbrush that has a SOFT bristle (scrubbing teeth with HARD bristle brushes doesn't actually do a better job of cleaning and can often damage your gums). There are many exciting innovations taking place with the newest in electronic toothbrushes. When used properly, electronic toothbrushes do a great job. When used improperly, they too, can cause damage. It's always a good idea to make an appointment with your dentist to discuss the use of an electronic toothbrush and review brushing techniques. Your dentist will be able to make recommendations as to the best toothbrush option for you - whether manual or electronic.

Q : MY DENTIST TOLD ME THAT I COULD HAVE A TOOTH COLORED FILLING. I BELIEVE THEY'RE MORE EXPENSIVE THAN DARK COLORED SILVER-MERCURY FILLINGS AND DO THEY WORK?

ANSWER: Yes, tooth colored filling materials have been around for quite some time now. In some cases, the investment for tooth colored restorations can exceed that of the old silver, mercury filled material and there's a good reason for that. Tooth colored (composite) fillings require more attention to detail and more time for actual placement. The materials used in composite restorations are more costly as well. And yes, tooth colored fillings do work! Composite fillings bond directly to the tooth and are light cured making the tooth stronger than it would be with a silver filling. They bond and strengthen the teeth, whereas the silver mercury fillings fill the holes, but do not strengthen the tooth.

Q : I HAVE HEARD ABOUT IMPLANTS FOR MISSING TEETH. DO THEY REALLY WORK? HOW STRONG ARE THEY?

ANSWER: Dental Implants are some of the most exciting options available today to replace missing teeth. If you're missing teeth - or even if you're missing only one tooth --dental implants may be an option for you. Because dental implants are imbedded in bone, they simulate natural teeth better than a denture or bridge. When placed by a trained professional, dental implants are durable and can last for decades. Visit the American Academy of Implant Dentistry's website at - www.aaid-implant.org to learn more about dental implants or discuss this option with your own dentist.

Q : MY TEETH DON'T HURT, BUT MY DENTIST SAYS I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THEM. IS THAT POSSIBLE?

ANSWER: As with medical problems, many times you are unaware until there is a significant problem. Undetected dental problems such as decay, abscesses, wear from misaligned bites, tumors, oral cancer, cysts, and periodontal disease often lie dormant with no signs of pain or swelling. Your dentist can often diagnose these problems before they turn into nightmares! If you are unsure about the diagnosis you've been given, tell your dentist. In most cases your dentist will be more than willing to help you to actually "see" the problems through the use of dental x-rays, intra oral cameras and digital cameras. If you're still unsure - ask your dentist about the possibility of seeking a second opinion. Don't worry about the possibility of your dentist being offended by your request - most dentists will welcome your interest and be happy to do whatever it takes to reassure you of the diagnosis.

Q : I HAVE HEARD THAT THE OLD STYLE SILVER FILLINGS CAN CRACK TEETH. IS THERE ANY TRUTH TO THAT?

ANSWER: Amalgam (traditional mercury, silver and other material make up dental amalgam) fillings do not bond to the tooth. The amalgam filling material actually just sits in a "pocket" or an area in the tooth created by your dentist. Healthy parts of your tooth must often be removed to make a space large enough to hold an amalgam filling. There is a greater risk that old-style amalgam fillings can expand sometimes-causing teeth to crack or break. With newer tooth colored (composite) restorations cracks or breaks in natural tooth structure are less likely because they actually bond to the tooth. Have your dentist evaluate the old amalgam fillings in your mouth. Replacement of an amalgam filling and restoration of a new tooth colored filling material is typically easy for the patient and in most cases can be accomplished in one visit. Replacements of amalgam fillings can also create a stronger, more long lasting tooth structure with the appearance of your natural teeth. In most cases, only a dental professional will be able to tell the difference.

Q : I WAS TOLD THAT I SHOULD GET SEALANTS ON MY CHILD'S TEETH. WHAT ARE THEY AND ARE THEY REALLY NECESSARY?

ANSWER: By placing a thin clear application of acrylic bonded to the biting surfaces of a tooth, decay can be prevented. Sealants for children are recommended for deciduous teeth (primary - sometimes called "baby teeth") as well as, permanent teeth. Some parents question this diagnosis due to the fact that the deciduous teeth will later be lost or removed making room for the permanent teeth. Placing this protective covering over primary teeth will help prevent decay and maintain the "baby tooth" in its position to prevent long-term problems from occurring with the permanent teeth. Sealants are recommended for permanent teeth to resist decay (cavities). Sealants are very affordable and can help preserve your child's teeth and prevent decay, thus preventing future problems. They are an excellent investment in your child's dental health!

Q : I HAVE NOTICED THAT MY TEETH ARE GETTING SHORTER. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE TO STOP THIS?

ANSWER: You should see your dentist as soon as possible. Through a comprehensive evaluation of your teeth and gums, your dentist can begin to determine what is causing your teeth to become shorter. In some cases, this situation is caused by poor occlusion (the way your teeth fit together when they're closed), how you chew and/or by tooth grinding during sleep. The good news is that, there are several techniques that are used to prevent your teeth from becoming shorter. Your dentist will determine if you are a candidate for Splint Therapy. Splint Therapy often involves the design of an Occusal Guard (Night Guard/Night Appliance) to protect your teeth. The Occusal Guard is a removable acrylic appliance usually worn at night to prevent bruxism (grinding of teeth) or joint problems associated with TMJ. In some cases Splint Therapy also includes a process called equilibration. Equilibration (adjusting the bite through the process of tooth surface reduction.) Ask your doctor about the best course of action for you.

Q : MY GUMS DON'T BLEED BUT MY DENTIST SAYS I HAVE GUM DISEASE? IS THAT POSSIBLE?

ANSWER: Periodontal Disease (gum disease) is often referred to as a "Silent Disease" which can lead to bone loss and eventual tooth loss. Although bleeding gums can be an early indication of Periodontal Disease, bleeding is not always present. A periodontal charting evaluation can be performed to measure the depth of detached tissue around the root structure of your teeth. This measurement will indicate the severity of the gum disease and help your dentist to monitor improvement as periodontal treatment is performed. Your Dentist and/or Dental Hygienist will be happy to provide you with your dental charting evaluation scores and educate you on the process. If you are a smoker, the odds are significant that you will have gum disease and your gums may never bleed. Ask your dentist for an evaluation.

Q : I HAVE A SPACE BETWEEN MY FRONT TEETH AND THEY'RE A LITTLE CROOKED ALSO. I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT I WOULD NEED BRACES. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT CAN BE DONE, OTHER THAN BRACES?

ANSWER: In some cases, Cosmetic Dentistry can be an alternative to Orthodontics (braces). Many patients have been extremely pleased with the results of cosmetic dental procedures used to close spaces between teeth and also to make them appear straighter. Talk to your dentist about the options available for your specific situation. Ask to see "Before and After" portfolios/pictures of such cases. Dentists are always happy to share their patient's "Smiling Success Stories".

Q : I AM A SMOKER. I HAVE HEARD THAT SMOKING CAN CAUSE ME TO HAVE GUM DISEASE AND POSSIBLY LOSE MY TEETH. I HAVE NOTICED THAT MY FRONT TEETH HAVE A SPACE BETWEEN THAT WASN'T THERE IN THE PAST. CAN I LOSE MY TEETH BECAUSE OF SMOKING?

ANSWER: Nicotine decreases oxygen flow to gums and bone. Complications can include infection with bleeding and swelling. This infection can cause the teeth to shift creating spaces between the teeth. This condition is called Periodontal Disease and can lead to eventual tooth loss. Smoking IS a contributing factor to tooth loss. Through a comprehensive evaluation of your teeth and gums, your dentist can help you to understand the negative effects that smoking may have on your dental health. Getting the gum disease under control is something that the dentist can help you with. Today's dental professionals are also very involved in helping their patients to stop smoking. Ask your Dentist about the support of prescription medications and education available to help during your "stop smoking" commitment.

Q : MY CHILD BRUSHES REGULARLY AND DOESN'T EAT A LOT OF CANDY, YET IT SEEMS THAT AT EVERY SIX-MONTH CHECKUP, HE HAS NEW CAVITIES. WHAT COULD BE THE PROBLEM?

ANSWER: Recurrent decay in children is a true concern in today's world. If your child is brushing and flossing on a regular basis (3-4 times per day and after every meal) and keeping his hands out of the "candy jar".... look at other causes for recurrent decay. Since sugar is a leading cause of tooth decay - Look for hidden forms of sugar in products such as soft drinks or fruit drinks. Kids favorites such as Dr. Pepper and Mountain Dew are especially high in sugar. Monitor/decrease or stop your child's intake of such products and see if this makes a difference! In some cases, your Dentist may also recommend the addition of fluoride supplements. Involve your children in dental health education - your dental hygienist will be happy to spend time with your children to help them understand their responsibility in the maintenance of optimum dental health.