



## Tooth Talk

by Linda Kreutzer, RDH

### Plaque and Tartar: What's the Difference?

Everyone has heard about “tartar-control” toothpaste. What is tartar and why do we want to control it? What is plaque? Plaque and tartar are not the same thing.

Plaque is the soft, crème colored, sticky substance that forms on our teeth soon after we eat something high in sugar. The more sugar we eat, the more plaque forms. Plaque is composed mostly of bacteria (germs). It can easily be brushed off.

Teeth and gums hate plaque. It's acidic, eats holes in the enamel of our teeth, and causes gums to bleed and become diseased. Because plaque is so sticky, rinsing with water or mouthwash cannot remove it. Thorough tooth brushing and flossing is the only way to effectively get plaque off of teeth. Doing this at least twice daily is necessary to prevent cavities.

Now about tartar. To put it simply, tartar is just hardened plaque. Plaque changes form and becomes mineralized (hardened). Our saliva contains the minerals calcium and phosphates. A slow chemical reaction occurs in plaque because of the presence of these minerals. Finally, the plaque becomes so hard that it cannot be removed with a toothbrush. Now it has a new name: tartar.

Everyone has felt tartar with their tongues on the inside surfaces of the lower front teeth, although it forms everywhere on teeth. It feels rough or “bumpy.” Its color ranges from white to crème, yellow, or brown. Tartar can become stained from tobacco use, turning it almost black from tar.

It's not a good idea to allow tartar to stay on the teeth for long because it irritates the gums. Tartar is a main cause of serious gum disease, causing the gums to pull away from the teeth, forming pockets. These pockets are havens for bacterial plaque.

The cycle continues until the tartar is professionally removed and daily plaque removal is maintained. Plaque is full of bacteria. Bacteria near an irritated gum next to a tooth covered with heavy tartar is an unhealthy combination. Bleeding gums are the first warning signs of trouble. It's best to get to the dentist and find out if tartar is a problem for you. There is more than cavities to think about with adult teeth.

How do we control plaque and tartar? Plaque gets controlled daily (hopefully) every time the teeth are completely brushed and flossed. The only way to remove tartar completely is to have your teeth professionally cleaned. Then you need to keep going back to the dental office at least every six months to keep tartar deposits from growing too large and inviting gum disease into the mouth. Remember, controlling plaque daily keeps tartar under control. Keeping them both at a minimum will help us keep our teeth for a lifetime, which is how long they will last if we take care of them.

Plaque and tartar are related. Plaque causes tartar to form. No plaque, no tartar. Good brushing and flossing will control both plaque and tartar. Keeping them both at a minimum will help us keep our teeth for a lifetime.

## Folic Acid for Women

Folic acid, a B vitamin, has been shown to help prevent birth defects in babies if consumed before and during pregnancy. For this reason, all women of reproductive age are urged to consume at least 400 micrograms of folic acid daily.

Folic acid can be found in most multivitamins, as well as in grains and leafy green vegetables. Talk to your physician about which vitamin supplements may be appropriate for you.

Source: <http://www.emazing.com/>

## Moe and Associates Open New Practice

Physical Therapist Eugene Moe opened a new office in Lincoln City on Oct. 15 as an extension of services offered by the Siletz Community Health Clinic.

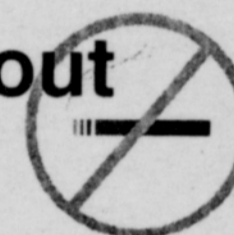
Gene and Ben Bertrand, PT, provide full service physical therapy for Siletz Tribal members as well as Chinook Winds and tribal employees and their families. Patients who are covered by Coho or other private insurance will be accepted only by medical referral. The newly refurbished office is located at 2120 44<sup>th</sup> St., Suite C, in Lincoln City.

Gene began providing physical therapy services in Lincoln County in 1981, eventually opening practices in Waldport and Albany as well as Newport, where his first office was located. He has worked in conjunction with the Siletz Clinic for the past six years.



## Great American Smokeout

Nov. 15, 2001



It's that time of year again! The Great American Smokeout, when people everywhere give up smoking for the day. Many people pick this day to give it up for good!

This year, be committed to giving up smoking. Here are some helpful hints as you prepare for Nov. 15 and beyond.

1. Schedule an appointment with your health care provider for a checkup and to discuss your health concerns.
2. Schedule an appointment for a cleaning with your dentist.
3. Gather up **all** tobacco, ashtrays, lighters, and matches to throw away (including those in the car) on your quit day.
4. Clean and deodorize your car and put up a no smoking sign.
5. Wash your curtains, clothing, and carpet. Deodorize your home and put up no smoking signs.
6. Repaint or wash your walls. Get someone to help you.
7. Begin a light exercise program (with doctor's permission, of course), such as walking, gardening, chair exercises, or aerobics.
8. Plan ahead for healthy snacks and well-balanced meals. Drink water!
9. Get out your favorite books, sewing, wood carving – whatever your hobby might be.
10. Write down your reasons for quitting smoking.
11. Write down a positive affirmation for each reason and put them up around your house where you can see them (i.e. “I feel energized and healthy living tobacco free,” “I am happy, healthy, and smoke free”).
12. Create your own space for relaxation, contemplation, or privacy.
13. Plan and prepare! Read up on cessation, health, and tips to quit prior to your quit date.
14. Get support from family, friends, spouse, prayer, counseling, etc. Try the buddy system – quit with a friend. Be each other's support.
15. See your Tobacco Prevention and Education Program for cessation information and additional support.
16. Write down your feelings, ups and downs, in a notebook or journal.
17. Practice breathing and relaxation exercises.
18. **Stay positive. You are doing it!**

