



## Tooth Talk

by Linda Kreutzer, RDH

### What Causes Bad Breath?

Have you ever wondered what causes bad breath? It's **germs**, better known in the dental business as **bacteria**.

Why do germs smell? The odor from bacteria is really from its waste products. Germs in our mouth are **alive!** They eat, grow, multiply, and get rid of waste just like any other living thing.

How can we control bacteria in our mouths? By controlling **plaque**. Plaque is the sticky, whitish deposit left behind on our teeth after eating or drinking things high in sugar. The more sugar we consume, the more plaque our mouths produce. Drinking less pop with sugar is a great place to start.

In our dental clinic, our dental assistant Amy tells patients, "Plaque is made up of bacteria or germs. Germs

eat sugar and poop acid." Well

said, Amy. This acid

is called plaque. Plaque

gets all

over our teeth and on our

tongues, causing odor, tooth decay, and decay of gums (gum disease). All of that can be pretty stinky.

It's important to do a thorough job of brushing our teeth at least twice a day and flossing at least once per day. Brushing the tongue is very important. Think of your tongue as a shag carpet. Plaque gets "stuck" between the fibers and begins to smell.

Plaque is a lot like battery acid – it corrodes things. It's not neutral like water or basic like Alka-Seltzer. Plaque is the most damaging thing we could possibly leave on our teeth. It's strong enough to eat holes in tooth enamel, which is 30 percent harder than bone!

Brushing is especially important in the morning. Morning stink-mouth is caused by the buildup of plaque during the night. There's been no food or drink or tongue movement to help clean the teeth.

Have you ever wondered why morning breath smells like, well ... poop? Because it is! It's those nasty bacteria germs going to the bathroom all night. It's not a nice thing to think about, but it's the biggest reason to grab a toothbrush first thing in the morning. And don't forget to brush that tongue!

The dental clinic is open from 7:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with lunch from noon to 12:45 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesday, it's open from 7:15 a.m. until noon.

This five-chair clinic is staffed by two general dentists, one dental hygienist, four dental assistants, and one receptionist.

## IHS Scholarship Applications Available, Due Feb. 28

Indian Health Service (IHS) Scholarship Program applications for the 2004-2005 academic year are now available. The deadline for applications to reach the IHS office in Portland, Ore., is Feb. 28, 2004.

Full-time and part-time academic scholarships will be funded in the following three programs:

- **Health Professions Preparatory Scholarship** awards are made to American Indian and Alaska Natives who have successfully completed high school education or high school equivalency **and** have been accepted for enrollment in compensatory, pre-professional general education courses or curriculum.
- **Health Professions Pre-graduate Scholarship** awards are made to American Indian and Alaska Natives who have successfully completed high school education or high school equivalency **and** have been accepted for enrollment or are enrolled in an accredited pre-graduate program leading to a bachelor's degree in pre-medicine or pre-dentistry.
- **Health Professions Scholarships** are awarded only to individuals who are members of a federally recognized tribe (state

recognition does not qualify). To be eligible for this scholarship, the individual **must** be enrolled in a federally recognized tribe and **must** be enrolled in an appropriately accredited school and pursuing a course of study in a health professional program.

IHS has about \$3,733,332 to fund these scholarships. Approximately 200 awards, 100 of which are continuing, are for 10 months duration and the average award to a full-time student is approximately \$20,000.

Benefits of the scholarships include:

- \$1,080 monthly living stipend (sent directly to student)
- Total "full" tuition payment to recipient's school
- Payment of reasonable educational expenses (as determined by school)
- \$400 available annually for tutorial expenses
- Up to \$300 for travel expenses
- Scholarship renewed if recipient maintains good academic status

Applications for these IHS scholarships can be requested from Dennis Imholt, Scholarship Coordinator, Portland Area Indian Health Service, 1220 SW Third Ave., Room 476, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-5716; [dimholt@pao.portland.ihs.gov](mailto:dimholt@pao.portland.ihs.gov).

If you have an **emergency or urgent dental problem**, please come to the clinic any weekday at 7:15 a.m. Each morning, we usually can see three or four emergency walk-in patients. If there's no time to treat a toothache, medicine may be prescribed to ease the symptoms.

Because we don't have the resources to provide complete dental care for all of our patients, our goal is to provide the most urgent care to those who need it the most. In this case, appointments will be given to diabetic patients; Head Start children; children (0-12 years), young adults with **advanced dental disease**, and other medically compromised patients; and Chemawa High School students.

Appointments for routine dental exams are available at various times. Call the dental receptionist for details.

This clinic serves more than 20,000 Native Americans in the Portland-Salem-Eugene area. The demand for dental care at Chemawa has increased well beyond our ability to provide complex treatment. Additionally, more than 400 Chemawa High School students are primary beneficiaries of this program. We also have a growing number of diabetics and elders with special needs.

This clinic **can** provide many types of dental services, including emergency services for toothaches and broken dentures (minor repairs, patients are responsible for fees charged by a dental laboratory), preventive and periodontal care (cleanings, fluoride, sealants, etc.), routine restorative care (fillings, including stainless steel crowns), root canal therapy (for front teeth and some molar teeth), and tooth extractions (including wisdom teeth).

We **cannot** provide dental implants or gold or porcelain crowns and bridges. Higher-level services, such as implants or bridgework, are available through private dental offices (at patient expense).

If you have dental insurance, you may find it more convenient to seek care at a private office. Chemawa is not responsible for any outside fees or insurance co-payments.

