



Tooth Talk

by Mary Ellen Volansky, RDH, MS

Wired for Health

Orthodontic treatment probably is the only treatment humans endure that yields such a visibly positive outcome, a bright smile. This is only one reason, among many health reasons, for having braces.

Occlusion is the way our teeth and jaws fit together. When the upper and lower teeth fit together easily, they are aligned properly. With proper alignment, we can efficiently chew with our teeth. We also can use our teeth more easily for talking and smiling. Brushing and flossing are easier too.

Whatever the cause of crowding, when teeth are misaligned chewing can become difficult. Food will need more time to be chewed, to break it into smaller and smaller pieces for swallowing. This is important because chewing is the first stage of digestion. In severe malocclusion, people can become fatigued from the mere act of chewing.

Another concern is the force that we exert when our jaw and teeth come together. Have you ever gotten your finger caught between the toothless gums/jaws of a baby?

Many years ago, as an inexperienced but curious dental hygienist, I did just that. I put my index finger inside my niece's mouth to feel her first tooth.

Instantly, I learned that infants are amazingly strong!

Take adult jaws and muscles, add teeth, and the pressures of chewing can be stronger still. When our teeth are in alignment, this pressure is shared among all the teeth in a mouth, not just one curious finger.

Teeth that are tilted or stand taller than the teeth around it will be the first ones touching when we chew. They touch/hit first each time we bring our teeth together.

This "touching" is more like pounding on that tooth and jaw. And this pounding can be felt as jaw

pain, face and neck muscle fatigue, and/or tooth pain or sensitivity. Plus, it can generate unnecessary wear and leave marks on or shorten teeth length.

This repetitive pounding can cause gum tissue to become red, swollen, and/or recede. With recession can come tooth sensitivity. If this continues, teeth can loosen and eventually need to be extracted. Poor home care can speed this process along and at this point, it's called periodontal disease.

Crowded teeth are more time consuming to thoroughly clean. Special tools are sometimes needed. Braces also make cleaning our teeth more time consuming. Remember, braces are a

short-term cleaning difficulty. Straight/aligned teeth are the easiest to clean.

The combination of misaligned teeth with ineffective home care gives cavities and periodontal disease a huge advantage. This is a preventable and a costly advantage, a cost you and your children pay in human sweat with each toothache or gum ache, injection, filling/crown, root canal, and extraction.

Indian Health Service (IHS) offers orthodontic services at the Salem Orthodontic Clinic under the direction of Dr. Mark McCollough. Children are screened at this clinic to determine if they qualify for this program.

If needed, referrals to this program should happen at about age 7. Treatment doesn't usually begin at this age, yet in some children treatment should start this early, when the bones of the jaws are actively growing.

Children with untreated decay are not eligible to be screened for this IHS program. Once a child has been admitted into the IHS Orthodontic Treatment Program, he/she must demonstrate thorough brushing and flossing.

Good home care while you have braces on will prevent future problems, such as demineralizations (white spots on teeth, early stages of decay), actual decay (brown spots), and/or bleeding gums with soreness and enlargement.

White spots don't go away. Decay must be drilled and filled. Sometimes enlarged gums don't go away either.

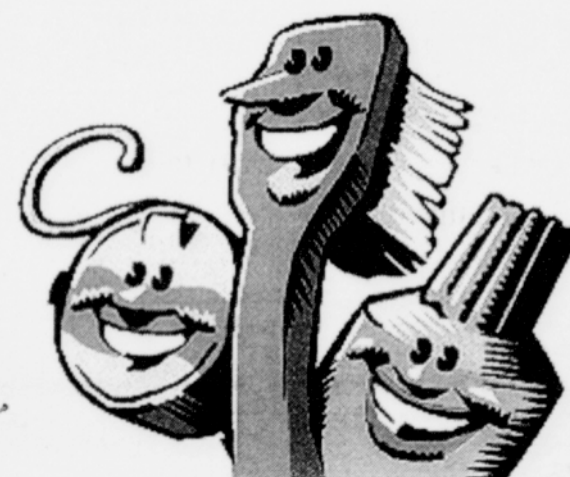


A child's monthly orthodontic treatment visits with Dr. McCollough do not replace his/her regular dental examination appointments with Dr. Randall Teich or Dr. Matthew Winkle. Nor do they replace recall appointments with the hygienist, both especially important with braces.

Check out the Siletz Dental Clinic's Web page for further links on this subject, including the history of orthodontic treatment. It also includes an e-mail address for Tooth Talk. If you have questions or topics you would like to see in this column, let us know.

So the next time you see straight aligned teeth, think healthy smiles!

This article was summarized from information provided by the American and the Canadian Association of Orthodontists, March 2006.



Something to Smile About? Yes!

New and Expanded Dental Clinic Hours

Open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the exception of the fourth Tuesday of each month. On that Tuesday, the Dental Clinic is open from 8 a.m. to noon.

Emergency dental check-in is from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. each day, except the fourth Tuesday of each month. On that Tuesday, emergency dental check-in is from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Dental Clinic hours can be found on the tribal Web page (www.ctsi.nsn.us) in the Dental Clinic section.



Fruits and Vegetables: Do You Eat 5-A-Day?

Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables is a fun and tasty way to help achieve a healthy weight. Eating fewer calories is a key component to controlling body weight. Discovering ways to include more fruits and vegetables every day is a top priority.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends eating more fruits and vegetables. Oranges, for example,

are easy to incorporate into meals and snacks throughout the day. These nutrient-dense whole fruits are low in calories and an excellent source of vitamin C and fiber.

Most of us should aim for 3-3½ cups of fruits and vegetables a day. Choosing fruits and vegetables from each of the five color groups – blue/purple (grapes, blueberries), green (bell pep-

pers, lettuce), white (cauliflower, turnips), yellow/orange (carrots, peaches), and red (strawberries, tomatoes) – is an easy way to get a wide variety.

Choosing an orange or other piece of fruit instead of chips or cookies can save 100-200 calories a day, which can translate into 10-20 pounds in a year.

Enjoy the following "word find" brought to you by www.5aday.com.

O	Z	F	W	P	J	Q	S	T	I	U	R	F	Y	S
S	L	I	B	K	J	R	W	V	N	B	P	W	X	U
E	L	V	E	G	E	T	Q	O	X	W	Y	V	I	P
I	H	E	H	R	W	K	L	S	M	U	L	P	R	E
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J	A	Q	P	K	B	G	S	E	H	C	A	E	P	E
W	Y	V	E	G	E	T	A	B	L	E	S	F	I	T

Find the words listed below. They can be diagonal, across, down, forward, or backward.

Plums
Peaches
Vegetables

Health
Supermarket
Five A Day
Fruits

Avocado
Watermelon
Berries