



Erin Hume (right) leads the discussion at a Green Team meeting.

## Green Team Starts Up at Clinic

by Erin Hume and Alison Noble, co-chairs

The Green Team strives to increase the three R's – reduce, reuse, recycle – by educating others and providing a positive alternative through modeled behaviors in order to create a respectful work environment.

Currently we are conducting a waste assessment, also called a waste audit. This is an industry term for looking in your trash dumpster or bins, determining how much of what materials you throw away each day/week, and determining how to reduce, reuse and recycle those materials.

Through a waste assessment, you can establish a waste "benchmark" for your business that will result in setting up waste reduction measures.

Here's a quote that sums up our philosophy:

Man's heart away from nature becomes hard: lack of respect for growing living things will soon lead to lack of respect for humans too.

~Chief Luther Standing Bear

Watch for exciting new changes that will be announced in future issues of *Siletz News*.



Dr. Matt Winkle and Alison Noble work to seal the teeth of a Siletz Valley Early College Academy student at the annual Sealant Clinic on March 12-13. Students from the academy and Siletz Valley School were able to take advantage of the clinic this year.



Dr. Molly Francis attends to another patient. More information on the Sealant Clinic will appear in the May issue of *Siletz News*. (photos by Diane Rodriguez)

## Tooth Talk

by Mary Ellen Volansky, RDH, MS

### Why Do I Have a Dry Mouth?

Dry mouth, xerostomia, is not a result of aging and should not be dismissed as such. Salivary flow in healthy, non-medicated elders does not vary significantly from younger individuals.

It's believed that the increased frequency of dryness complaints with aging is a result of systemic (body) disease and medications, both more common in elders and both are associated with dry mouth.<sup>1</sup>

Dry mouth is the subjective feeling of oral dryness. The most frequently voiced complaint is a feeling of dryness of all the oral mucosal surfaces, including the throat. Additionally, a person may report difficulty in chewing, swallowing, or speaking.

A need to drink fluids to help swallow while eating or an inability to swallow dry foods also is common. Pain is often reported and the oral mucosa may be sensitive to spicy or coarse foods, which may limit a person's diet and enjoyment of meals.

Why is saliva so important? Saliva does more than keep the mouth wet, which is no small contribution to our oral comfort. It also helps digest food, protects teeth from decay, prevents in-

fection by controlling bacteria and fungi in the mouth, and it makes it possible for you to chew and swallow.<sup>2</sup>

The most frequent cause of dry mouth is the use of prescription drugs. Of the top 20 prescription drugs, only three do not cause dry mouth and/or other oral-related side effects.<sup>3</sup> More than 400 medicines can cause the salivary glands to make less saliva.<sup>4</sup>

Examples of commonly used herbs that can affect saliva levels include capsicum, garlic, ginkgo biloba and St. John's Wort. Herbal preparations with strong diuretic properties (increased urine output, thus loss of water in the body) include stinging nettle and dandelion. Caffeine also is well-recognized as a cause of dry mouth.

Some medical therapies can result in xerostomia. Radiotherapy to the head and neck region (where salivary glands live) and systemic delivery of radionuclides for thyroid cancer can cause dry mouth. Bone marrow transplantation also can have xerostomia as a side effect.

Systemic disease is another major cause of dry mouth. A large number of conditions can affect salivary gland

flow and lead to dryness. For example: diabetes, thyroid disorders, cystic fibrosis, Sjogren's syndrome, poorly controlled diabetes, HIV/AIDS, late stage liver disease and eating disorders.

Are there concerns for dry mouth beyond comfort? Yes.

Comfort is essential for anyone who wants to maintain oral health. Happily, most of the treatments for comfort also aid the prevention of oral problems – cavities, gum disease and infections of the mouth (i.e., fungal infections).

Stay away from sugar, sodas, caffeine, alcohol and spices. These all contribute to the risk of oral diseases of our teeth and gums. This is especially true when dry mouth is present. Well, not spices but they can cause pain for some people with dry mouth.

Your physician is the one to see about locating the cause of dry mouth. It's especially important to determine if the cause of dry mouth is from disease or prescription medications.

Your oral health professional is the one to see for relief of dry mouth symptoms. Many options are available for easing dry mouth; some are over-the-counter and others are prescriptions.

Chewing will stimulate salivary flow, as will sour tastes. Products containing Xylitol are helpful as it's not only sugar, but it also fights cavities. Patient reports of success are the best source and Tribal patients have told me Xylitol helps ease their dry mouth symptoms.

Acknowledging that you have dry mouth and being willing to ask for help is essential to minimizing dryness symptoms, to begin treatment and preventive care, and to limit complications.

This information was summarized from *Xerostomia: Recognition and Management* by Philip C. Fox, DDS, FDS, RCSEd, February 2008 supplement of *Access*, a journal of the American Dental Hygienists' Association unless otherwise indicated.

1 *Xerostomia: Recognition and Management*, by Philip C. Fox, DDS, FDS, RCSEd, *Access* magazine, February 2008.

2 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, NIH Publication No. 06-3174, June 2006

3 *Access* magazine, 2008, American Dental Hygienists' Association

4 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, NIH Publication No. 06-3174, June 2006