

Clearing the Inbox...

Some of my dental related email arrives in regards to specific questions that apply to specific patients. The vast majority of my inbox has to do with “one time offers” or “must have” products that will “make your life a whole lot better.” Occasionally, I get an email regarding a common question that applies to a broad audience. These get printed out and filed for future article use. Today, please allow me to clean out my inbox.

How often should I get my teeth cleaned? I read somewhere that the common perception of bi-annual dental cleanings and check-ups actually originated from a toothpaste advertisement in the 1950’s. The truth is that dental cleanings are a good idea whenever there is enough build-up on the teeth to cause gingivitis or red, swollen gums. Commonly, this occurs on three, four, or six month intervals. Each and every mouth is a little different depending on diet, genetics, habits, and oral hygiene.

Does everybody need braces? Recently, I was discussing orthodontics (braces) with a colleague who is a pediatric (children’s) dentist. Neither of us had a researched, conclusive answer to this question, but we agreed that about 85-90 percent of our patients would benefit from orthodontic treatment. Today, we know that a malocclusion (bad bite) can contribute to a variety of health problems besides crooked teeth. In my opinion, this is why we see more and more kids and adults wearing braces.

Can I get straight teeth without braces? In one word...absolutely. There are many alternatives to the old silver brackets on your front teeth. Teeth can be straightened orthodontically with ceramic or tooth colored brackets, clear removable trays, retainer type appliances, and hidden or lingual brackets. Crowns or ceramic veneers can also be placed to correct teeth that are out of alignment.

Do kids need to floss? There’s an old dental saying, “You only need to floss the teeth you want to keep.” Although they are lost between the ages of six and twelve, children’s teeth are actually very important in helping to guide the growth of the skull and jawbones. Interproximal or cavities between teeth are one of the most common found in baby teeth. So, yes, help your kids floss their teeth daily.

How long should a filling/crown/denture/root canal/veneer last? This is one of the most commonly asked questions we receive. There are studies on the longevity of each and every procedure that we do. The problem is that lab testing does not always equate to real life. The longevity of any dental work really depends on the individual and the bacteria that live in their mouth. Good oral hygiene, regular dental cleanings, fluoride application, and flossing all help to keep natural teeth and dental restorations healthy longer. A positive attitude and healthy lifestyle also seem to help.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please email comments to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.