

Preventative Maintenance

I knew we had about an hour to work. Our baby girl (Peyton) was down for her morning nap, so Parker and I were headed to the barn to do some preventative maintenance on the skid steer. Baby monitor technology, being what it is, allows me to perform chores and literally watch my daughter sleep at the same time. An hour nap should have been plenty of time to rinse things down, clean a couple of air filters, and grease a few joints.

Forty five minutes later and we hadn't even gotten close to the skid steer. We had managed to catch a frog, dig a small hole with one of Parker's toy tractors, and climb up and down a pile of rocks fifty-seven times. Just as I opened the door to the Cat to move it into hose reach the red lights on the baby monitor lit up...signaling the awakening of the princess and the anointed hour for her next bottle. I wonder why I never get anything done when I'm watching the kids.

Please stick with me, I do have a point. Maintenance is an issue for us all, no matter what we do or where we live. Trucks, homes, pastures, gardens, you name it and we all spend time keeping things in order. Sometimes in the hustle and bustle of life we forget to maintain ourselves. I know people who get their oil changed every three thousand miles, but fail to visit their doctor or dentist on a regular basis. I will be the first to admit that I'm calling the kettle black here because I don't always make my yearly physical on time. Something about the old prostate exam keeps me pushing things back. No pun intended.

As with anything else we own, maintenance of our teeth prevents problems and makes financial sense in the long run. Ask anyone who has broken a tooth and had to have a crown and root canal. It's a lot cheaper, as well as less painful, to fix things before they break. Heck, even insurance companies know that if they pay for regular cleanings and exams at one hundred percent, it'll save them in the long run.

Regular cleanings and exams allow us to catch things early and to monitor the health of your gums, teeth, and restorations that you already have. Oral cancer screenings, which we do at every patient visit, could save your life. I cannot count the number of times I've seen patients with toothaches and thought to myself, "If only we'd gotten to this sooner..."

Many problems that we see today with crooked teeth and bad bites can be corrected early on. We have treated kids for orthodontic problems as early as seven years of age. In other words, seeing a dentist regularly and catching things early can make your kids' experiences with braces a lot shorter and possibly unnecessary.

So how often should you go to the dentist? The answer varies, according to your teeth. Kids should start as soon as they get their first teeth. How often you go will depend on your overall oral health. Some people get by just fine every six months. Others, especially patients with gum disease, need cleanings as often as every three months. Personally, I get my teeth cleaned every other month because I have a permanent retainer that accumulates tarter at an alarming rate. We're all a little different. That's why my diesel oil changes cost so much more than my wife's Suburban. We're all a little different.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Questions or comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish at ParrishDental@aol.com.