

## Your bite and you...

There are aspects of dentistry that we practice on a daily basis that barely existed when we were in training to become dentists. This is true for dentists both young and old. Much of what Jennifer and I learned in school has changed within the last ten years. It now takes a lifelong commitment of study just to stay an average dentist, much more if you want to try and be the best that you can be. I suspect the same is true of most professions these days.

Through the years, I have always been science minded. I suspect I was a child that had to always learn and see things for myself. Come to think of it, I do remember at least one science experiment gone awry. My thirst for knowledge got me evicted from my best friend's house for one entire summer. It seems his mother did not particularly like the smell of our experimental stink bomb that we exploded in her laundry room. To be honest, even the weapon's co-creators thought it particularly rank and nasty. Our plans for a second, better version (intended for his older brother's closet) were foiled when his science kit mysteriously disappeared.

I digress.

The most important thing I've learned in dentistry until now is this: The way that your teeth meet together and the way that your jaw functions can have a huge impact on your overall health, as well as your dental health. As truly corny as this may sound, a good bite can change your life.

At this point, I've probably lost most of my valued readers. Please read on, as this may affect the life of someone you know.

What is a bad bite? A bad bite is one that puts undue pressure on the jaw joints and the nerves and blood vessels around those joints. This can cause clenching, grinding, intense pain, and chronic headaches. A bad bite is one that allows the muscles of the tongue, face, and neck to collapse into to the airway at night and contribute to snoring and sleep apnea. Obstructive sleep apnea can kill you. A bad bite is one that causes wrinkles in your lower face and makes the distance from your chin to the base of your nose look compressed. You can look older than you really are, just from a bad bite. A bad bite can transmit chronic pain into your neck and shoulders. It can even affect the release of hormones in your body. The bottom line is that a bad bite is bad news.

I am out of space for the week, so I'll try to touch on the causes of a bad bite next week. Until then, keep smiling.

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