



An Ounce of Prevention: Dental Disease

Did you know that the bacteria that causes dental disease is contagious?

So How Do You Catch Bacteria?

When you are born, there are no bacteria in your mouth. You catch your first bacteria from your mother and primary caregiver. As you age you catch more bacteria from your parents or primary care givers, others in your immediate family, and then from your contact with other people. This happens when you share food, utensils, and drinks, and even when you kiss! You can't avoid catching the bacteria no matter who you are, what you do, or where you live. The bacteria multiply so you might only catch a few at first, say two, but they multiply to 4...8...16...32 to millions. Although there are many types of bacteria that live in your mouth, only a few are harmful. Once the bacteria grow and multiply in your mouth, they form bacterial colonies, which are a sticky substance called plaque.

So How Do You Protect Yourself And Your Loved Ones From The Devastating Effects, Cost, And Pain Of Dental Disease?

The most effective way to prevent disease is by controlling the number/amount of bacteria in your mouth. You need to clean away the bacteria and spit them out multiple times per day to keep the number of bacteria from increasing to the point where disease starts. That means, at a minimum, you should brush and floss twice per day.

If you want to do more than the minimum to keep dental bacteria at bay:

- Mouth rinses can help
- Consider tiny brushes to clean between your teeth
- Electric toothbrushes are good, too because in a given amount of time, they do more work, more cleaning

So, no excuses. When all is said and done, the vast majority of dental problems (not accidents) are a result of personal choice, the foods you eat, the quality of your homecare, and regular preventive visits to your dentist.



So How Do You Avoid Getting Sick, Dentally Speaking?

The story goes like this. You have a certain resistance (immunity) to diseases. The disease causing germs increase in number (multiply) or strengthen (virulence). At some point, they overwhelm your body's ability to fight them. In essence, signs of disease indicate your body is losing the battle. With dental disease, this shows up as you getting cavities, red, swollen, bleeding gums (gum disease gingivitis), the loss of supporting bone holding in your teeth (periodontal disease), bad breath, loose teeth, and eventually teeth needing to be taken out.

If that's not bad enough, the bacteria associated with gum and bone disease can make other diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and certain lung conditions - just to name a few - worse.



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