

A New Year for Dental Health

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Pediatric & General Dentistry

'Tis the season for new year's resolutions. This year adding some dental related resolutions may prove beneficial to both your health and pocket book. Below are recommendations that can improve your oral and possibly systemic health in the new year as well as in years to come.

1. Visit your Dentist. If you didn't go to the dentist last year, make it a priority to make an appointment for an exam and cleaning. Checkups are not just for cleaning teeth and checking for cavities. A dentist should be evaluating your entire mouth for periodontal disease, oral cancer, signs of acid erosion, grinding your teeth, snoring, and many other concerns. In fact, systemic issues can sometimes be discovered by dentists due to evidence arising in the mouth.

2. Limit the Amount and/or Duration of Consuming Carbohydrates. Anything that is a carbohydrate will feed the bacteria that produce cavities. The longer and more the bacteria are fed, the more acid they produce which results in a higher risk of cavities. Limiting the amount of carbohydrates and acids you consume will help. Furthermore, limiting the length of time you consume the same amount can be beneficial, too.

For example, instead of slowing snacking on crackers and a soda over an hour, reduce the duration of the same snack to 10-15 minutes. This limits the time your mouth stays acidic. In an acidic environment, the cavity-causing bacteria work more efficiently.

3. Address Bleeding Gums. Bleeding gums are not an indication that you should brush and floss less. It is a sign that the gums are irritated from an accumulation of bacteria. Not addressing bleeding gums can lead to tissue and bone attachment loss, caused by periodontal disease. Addressing these problems at an early stage are not complicated, but if left untreated can cause additional treatment and even loss of teeth.

4. Address Bad Breath. Halitosis, or bad breath, can be a sign of a greater underlying problem. It can be related to a buildup of bacteria in the mouth, foods you eat, dry mouth, periodontal disease, large cavities or abscessed teeth, tobacco, diabetes, or other factors. Improving oral hygiene and asking your dentist about the potential causes is essential. It is also important to note that mints not only conceal the problem, but also increases your risk of cavities.

5. Have Your Snoring Evaluated. Snoring may be a sign of obstructive sleep apnea, which can be very harmful to your health. Snoring is caused by air being restricted in the back of the throat and nose. When your body does not receive the oxygen it requires, your brain subconsciously wakes you up in order to get the oxygen it needs. This can happen many times a night and leads to poor sleep. Addressing this with your physician and dentist is a must. For mild to moderate sleep apnea patients, your dentist may be able to make a comfortable, effective appliance that reduces snoring and improves sleep.

6. Smile More. A smile is the product of being happy, but research has shown the act of smiling can produce happiness. Smiling has been proven to be contagious, makes us more approachable and attractive, lifts our mood as well as others around us, and may help us live longer.

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