

New Town Dental Arts News

April, 2011

Here, Use My Toothbrush...

Ever use someone else's toothbrush? You may think twice about doing it again after reading this:

- Toothbrushes can be a source of repeated dental infections.
- Toothbrushes can cause a bacteremia (bacteria entering the bloodstream) that may result in an endocarditis (a heart infection).
- Toothbrushes can harbor and transmit viruses and bacteria.
- Toothbrushes can retain 50% of the herpes simplex virus for one week.
- Gingival [gum] inflammation can be reduced by changing toothbrushes biweekly.

Still think it's sexy to share a toothbrush? How about sharing food? Kissing? Certain bacteria can be transmitted from site-to-site in the mouth via dental instruments or from person-to-person sharing someone else's eating utensil. In juvenile periodontitis, virulent bacteria can move from an infected site to an uninfected site in the same mouth. Certain bacteria can be transmitted between spouses. Certain bacteria can be transmitted between parents and children. Certain bacteria can be transmitted from dogs to children.

So you see, bacteria once thought to be localized to specific sites in the mouth, can be migratory. We're not advocating that you stop tasting a scrumptious morsel or two at a four-star restaurant; we are advocating that everyone maintain good dental health not only for themselves but for the sake of those they love.

As far as ridding toothbrushes of bacteria, soaking them in a mouthrinse containing essential oils for 20 minutes kills 100% of the bacteria on the bristles. Ultraviolet light also sanitizes toothbrushes. But when researchers* tested the efficacy of using a toothpaste containing a common disinfectant compound - triclosan - they found little benefit when it came to eliminating the offending bacteria attached to the toothbrush bristles.

So what can you do about bacterial contamination from toothbrushes? Soak them in a suitable mouthwash, expose them to ultraviolet light, or from a practical stance, change them frequently. As for kissing someone, the benefits may still outweigh the risks ...as long as you have an inkling as to their periodontal status!

*Warren DP, Goldshmidt MC, Thompson MB, Adler-Storhz K, and Keene HJ: The effects of toothpastes on residual microbial contamination of toothbrushes. JADA 132:1241-1245, 2001.

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Help! I Broke My Tooth!

Almost every day we get a call from a patient who has broken a tooth, and generally it means that to save the tooth, we have to place a crown or permanent restoration over it to keep it from breaking further. Sometimes the tooth can't be saved and that is a real bummer!

What causes teeth to break? Well, there are several factors, one of which we see in almost all tooth fractures. The most common contributing factor is Silver amalgam fillings- these fillings have the unique property of enlarging as they age. So, there seems to be some outward pressure on the tooth and if someone bites just the right (or wrong) way, you hear that crack!

Now this tooth broke in several planes at once, and had to be removed; there wasn't enough sound tooth structure to save it! So an implant or bridge needed to be done.

This is a more common sort of fracture. The inside aspect of the tooth just shears away. Luckily, this tooth can be saved with a crown, after first making sure there is no decay present.

The second common factor is bruxism- the habit of grinding or clenching the teeth. Many bruxers break teeth that don't even have fillings in them, but they always have a higher percentage of broken teeth than people who don't brux or clench.

If you or someone you know does grind their teeth and are worried about a tooth or some teeth, don't hesitate to give us a call and we will be glad to check it out for you! Don't wait until it hurts!

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Tired Of Old Discolored Fillings?

How we perceive our smile and appearance affects our self-esteem, our moods and how we function in social and business relationships. Common conditions that impact negatively on your smile include broken, cracked or worn teeth, discolored teeth, missing teeth, crooked teeth, decayed teeth, gaps between your teeth and/or "gummy smiles." Each patient and each specific circumstance must be evaluated on its own merits. Factors such as occlusion [bite], oral habits, available space, health of the gum tissue, severity of the problem and patient expectation must be taken into consideration while planning your cosmetic makeover. Tooth-colored fillings [restorations] may begin to look grungy after a period, depending on your eating and drinking habits and the length of time the restorations have been in your mouth.

One choice would be to replace the tooth-colored resin fillings with new composite restorations. However, they may pick-up stains along the restoration/tooth interface, and eventually, they too will begin to discolor or breakdown. In an effort to keep expenses down now, your decision for this replacement treatment plan may cost more over the long run and may still not satisfy your cosmetic needs. The patient seen here chose to have cosmetic porcelain veneers bonded to her teeth. Porcelain will not discolor or fade. You can see how

uniform and spectacular her teeth look. Call our office if you think you're a candidate for this type of procedure.