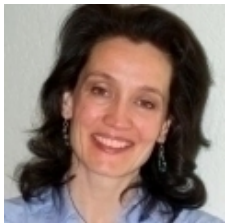


Taking care of teeth has other health benefits

By Mandy Kendall

I have been staying with a girlfriend recently and, like many families, they have certain routines that help with the day-to-day flow of things, and help make sure my friend doesn't lose her mind in the process of running a busy household.

The evening routine is particularly regimented to ensure that books and clothes are ready for school, homework is finished and dishes are all cleared away before anyone gets to watch TV. All of this seems to happen easily and without fuss, that is until it's time to brush teeth. What is it about cleaning teeth when we are young that causes such stubbornness? I remember causing my poor mother so much trouble about teeth cleaning.



Mandy
Kendall

None of us particularly likes going to the dentist, so you'd think we would do all we could to make sure we had to make as few visits as possible.

Now research and studies are also showing that cleaning your teeth is not just about reducing cavities and having fresh breath.

A recent study from the University of California showed a

correlation between daily brushing and a reduced risk of developing dementia later in life. Also, the Journal of American Geriatrics Society conducted a long-term study of elderly subjects and concluded that the female subjects who didn't practice daily brushing had a 65 percent greater chance of developing dementia.

A study by the American Journal of Medicine found that adults who had regular thorough dental cleanings have a lowered risk of heart attacks compared to those adults who pay less attention to their oral health. The same study also found a link between regular scaling (having your teeth scraped) and a reduced incidence of strokes.

The Journal of Periodontology published a study that showed that oral infections could raise the risk of respiratory diseases, including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and pneumonia, due to bacteria getting into the respiratory tract and infecting the lungs. The same journal also published another study showing a link between poor dental health and pre-term and low birth weight amongst pregnant women.

So it seems that cleaning your teeth is not just about having a dazzling smile and reducing the number of visits to the dentist.

So here are a few *Qwik-e* tips about how to make the best job of keeping your pearly whites, well, pearly white and keeping the rest of you healthy at the same time.

After every meal – If it's not possible or practical to clean your teeth after every meal, try to at least rinse your mouth vigorously with warm water to shift food particles in between your teeth that otherwise will encourage bacteria growth. Brushing is also a great indicator to your brain that mealtime is over and will also make you less likely to reach for something sweet too. Brushing should happen at least every morning and evening.

Floss – I know, everyone knows they should floss but how many of us do? Tie a piece of floss around your toothbrush to remind you of what you should be doing. Ask your dentist whether you should be using floss or interdental brushes and what thickness and type would be best for your teeth. It doesn't take long and you can even do it watching the TV.

Brush your tongue – Why do a great job on your teeth only to have your tongue wipe bacteria all over them again?

Mouthwash – Can be very effective for dislodging any small bits of food or bacteria you may have missed with your toothbrush. Just be aware that a lot of mouthwashes contain alcohol so these are not suitable for children and may also make your mouth and lips dry out, too. There are alcohol free mouthwashes available.

Change your toothbrush regularly – Most brushes have a color on the bristles that indicates, when the color has faded, that you need to get a new one.

Manual or powered? – Studies show that one is not necessarily better than the other, but people tend not to spend as long as they should cleaning their teeth so they have a better chance with a powered toothbrush that works faster (and also will usually have a timer inbuilt to let you know how long to brush for).

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

