



Grandparents Corner

October 2012

National Orthodontic Health Month

Oral health may have more value than just preserving your smile. Researchers are continuing to find association between cavities, gum disease and heart disease. Some diseases are associated with an increased risk of infections. Diabetes increases the risk of gingival and periodontal inflammation and infections. Loose teeth can be a warning sign for osteoporosis, and a misaligned jaw can cause chronic migraines.

A bacterium naturally occurs in our mouths, but when oral bacteria goes too far, it forms a sticky plaque that can lead to gum or periodontal disease.

The American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) recommends that children should be seen for their first orthodontic visit no later than age seven. While the age of seven may seem unusually early to consider for braces, this pre-screening will give the orthodontist the opportunity to use preventative measures to possibly correct a situation that may lead to braces in the future.

Braces are used to move teeth into the ideal position and align how they bite together, known as occlusion. Malocclusion is when the teeth between the upper and lower dental arches are misaligned. The Angles Classification Method is used by many dentists around the world, using the three classes below:

- Class I - Considered the ideal relationship between the upper and lower teeth. Crowding or spacing may be present with Class I bite.
- Class II - Commonly known as "overbite." The patient's lower first molar is positioned posterior, or more towards the back of the mouth. The upper jaw, or maxilla, appears to protrude forward. Class II bite has two sub-classes that also describe the position of the upper front teeth, but in both cases, the molar relationship is the same.
- Class III - The patient's lower first molar is positioned anterior, or closer to the front of the mouth. The lower jaw, or mandible, protrudes forward, and is best described as an "underbite."

Misaligned teeth and an incorrect bite may affect more than just the appearance. The following conditions may potentially be corrected by orthodontics:

- Speech Impediments
- Jaw or TMJ Pain
- Difficulty Chewing and Eating
- Sleep Apnea Caused by Mouth Breathing and Snoring
- Grinding or Clenching of the Teeth
- Gum Disease and Tooth Decay

Whether or not your loved one needs braces can only be determined by a trained orthodontist. If they are having any of the above problems, you should contact their dentist to determine the cause of the condition. Remember, healthy teeth and gums improve facial structure and enhance self-esteem. To find an orthodontist in your area, visit the American Association of Orthodontics website at www.mylifemysmile.org

QUICK QUIZ

Those with vision impairment are more likely to experience falls and injuries. Visual impairment makes a person more likely to trip over objects they are unable to see in their walking path. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below about eye health.

1. Smoking more than 20 cigarettes a day doubles the risk of macular degeneration.
T F
2. Our eyes can never be injured in the safety of our own home. T F
3. People over 65 no longer need to have eye exams. T F
4. Glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness in the U.S. T F
5. It is important to see the doctor immediately if the person has blurred vision, flashes of light, or blind spots. T F
6. Good nutrition affects many things, but not eyesight. T F
7. Excessive exposure to fluorescent lights, computer screens, smoke and sunlight can damage eyesight. T F
8. An eye exam can alert you to the first signs of high blood pressure. T F
9. Fire kills and injures more people every year than any other force of nature. Senior and disabled persons are especially vulnerable. T F
10. There is no cure for macular degeneration, but treatments can slow its progress.
T F

KEY: 1. T 2. F 3. F 4. T 5. T 6. F 7. T 8. T 9. T 10. T