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A NEWSLETTER WITH YOUR ORAL HEALTH IN MIND

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DENTAL EMERGENCY TIPS FOR VACATION TRAVEL

Dental emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time. Being prepared can make the difference between handling a dental problem and resuming your fun, or having plans ruined. Here are some basic items you can pick up at any drugstore to help you: over the counter pain medications, cotton gauze, floss (we know that none of our patients would leave without floss, but we just mentioned it for completeness), and paraffin wax.

While you should go to another dental office or emergency room if needed, here are some tips on how to handle possible minor dental problems:

Toothache – Rinse your mouth well with warm water and gently floss between the teeth to remove any trapped food. Use a cold compress on the outside of the cheek. If there is swelling present, take a pain reliever. Never place an aspirin directly on the tooth or gum.

Broken Tooth - Rinse with warm water, and apply a cold compress to the cheek. Also try warming the paraffin wax and molding it with your fingers over the broken area of the tooth.

Objects Wedged Between Teeth – Gently remove the object with floss. Tie a small knot in the floss. Gently glide the floss between the teeth and pull the knot through to dislodge the trapped food.

Lost Filling – Cover the cavity with paraffin, and take pain relievers as needed.

Bitten Tongue or Lip – Put direct pressure on the bleeding area with a clean cloth or gauze and

apply a cold compress to minimize swelling. If the bleeding continues, go to a nearby dental office or hospital.

DO I REALLY NEED TO FLOSS?

Yes. Floss removes plaque and debris that sticks in between teeth, polishes tooth surfaces, and controls bad breath. Flossing is the single most important weapon against plaque and, in some ways, more important than the toothbrush. By flossing your teeth daily, you increase the chance of keeping them for a lifetime and decrease the chance of getting gum disease. Many people don't spend enough time flossing and many never have been taught the proper way to floss.

HOW TO FLOSS:

Take an 18-inch piece of floss and wind the bulk of the floss lightly around the middle finger. (Don't cut off your circulation!) Wind the rest of the floss similarly around the same finger of the opposite hand. Bring the floss up and down several times forming a "C" shape around the tooth being sure to go below the gum line.

WHAT IS BRUXISM AND WHO SUFFERS FROM IT?

Bruxism is the technical term for teeth grinding and clenching that can cause facial pain. It is estimated that almost 85% of the population will grind or clench their teeth at some point during their lifetime. Bruxism becomes a problem when it is done for an extended period of time, often

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without the individual even being aware they are grinding or clenching their teeth.

Bruxism can start at any age. It is a common by-product of stress, and can also be brought on by trauma to the jaw, improper tooth position, sleeping disorders, use of certain medications, and physical ailments. People can grind or clench their teeth day or night, but it is very common as a night time habit.

At Downtown Dental Associates, we routinely check each patient's mouth for clinical signs of bruxism. We check the jaw joint (tempromandibular joint-TMJ) for clicking and popping noises, the amount of opening, and smoothness of jaw movement. The teeth are checked for wear, flattening of the cusp tips, fractures, and sensitivity. The tongue, cheeks and facial muscles are checked for signs of bruxism.

If you have bruxism we will be happy to discuss your options with you. The objective of therapy for bruxism is to get the bruxer to change behavior by learning how to rest the tongue, teeth and lips properly. While simply becoming aware of the problem and changing

behavior may be enough for some people, others will require wearing a plastic mouth appliance, such as a night guard, that is worn to absorb the force of grinding. This appliance can prevent further damage to the teeth.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF BRUXISM?

- Tips of the teeth are worn down and look flat
- Sensitivity due to the inside of the tooth (dentin) being exposed from grinding.
- Jaw pain, popping and clicking of the tempromandibular joint. (TMJ)
- Tongue indentation
- Jaw muscle soreness
- Headache

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Downtown Dental Associates is constantly working to provide you, our valued patients with quality dentistry in a friendly and caring atmosphere. Please help us in our efforts to best serve you by sending us your thoughts and suggestions. Please email Leanne at: leanne@ddaportland.com