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Spring 2010 Newsletter

A NEW BABY GIRL IS ON HER WAY

Toshia Stott, a hygienist at DDA, is expecting a baby girl in July. Congratulations to Andrew and Toshia!

ORAL CANCER

The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 35,000 Americans will be diagnosed with oral cancer this year. Traditionally, individuals over age 50 who smoke and frequently consume alcohol were thought to be at a higher risk for oral cancer.

However, research has identified an increasing proportion of oral cancer patients who do not fit the above criteria. They are finding patients in their 20s and 30s who were exposed to the human papilloma-virus [HPV] developing oral cancer. HPV 16, the strain that most commonly causes cancers of the uterus and cervix, is also the same strain of the virus that's seen in oral and oropharyngeal cancers.

Cessation of smoking and heavy alcohol consumption remains the best advice for reducing the risk of developing oral cancer. As part of every oral hygiene exam, we provide a visual oral cancer evaluation. If you would like additional information, please feel free to ask us at your next visit.

TOOTHPASTE

Toothpaste has many functions: It eliminates and/or masks bad breath, removes dental plaque and food from teeth, polishes teeth, and removes stains over time. Overall, toothpaste promotes good oral health.

Why is toothpaste important?

Toothpaste, also known as dentifrice, is available in paste, gel, or powder form. Despite the many types of toothpaste that exist, some ingredients are common to many varieties of toothpaste. These include:

- Abrasives to grind away the left-over food and plaque on your teeth with the help of your tooth brush. In addition, abrasives polish your teeth and remove stains over time.
- Fluoride to make the entire tooth structure more resistant to decay and promote remineralization which makes your teeth stronger.
- Antimicrobial agents, such as xylitol or triclosan, fight the bacteria that cause dental plaque and gum disease.
- Surfactants (detergents) and foaming agents to carry away debris from the mouth and between teeth.
- Anti-tartar agents to help prevent the formation of tartar which is also referred to as calcified plaque.
- Desensitizing agents to relieve tooth sensitivity.
- Binding agents, to bind all the components of the toothpaste together.
- Humectant to prevent your toothpaste from drying up.
- Flavor to make the brushing experience more enjoyable.
- Sweetening agents to make the formulation more suitable for oral use.

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Why do toothpastes contain abrasives?

Like other products that are designed to clean, toothpastes contain abrasive agents to help scrub and remove stains while also polishing and cleaning teeth. Abrasives also make the teeth appear whiter by removing stains from the tooth surface. While toothpaste must be abrasive enough to scrub away stubborn stains and harmful bacteria, it must not be so abrasive that it wears away vital tooth enamel.

How do I minimize the risk of tooth wear?

Wear on teeth can be minimized by selecting the right toothpaste and by practicing proper brushing techniques. An ideal technique includes using short, gentle strokes in a circular motion with a soft-bristle brush.

How do I know which toothpaste is right for me?

When it comes to choosing the best toothpaste for you, it's important to think about your unique oral health needs. Some toothpastes aim to alleviate pain associated with sensitive teeth. Some help to control plaque and tartar. Others are designed to remove stains and whiten teeth. Because each brand of tooth paste is uniquely formulated to perform a specific function, speak with your DDA dentist or hygienist to determine which is right for you.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CANKER SORES AND FEVER BLISTERS

Often, canker sores (mouth ulcers) are confused with fever blisters (cold sores). Fever blisters and canker sores share several features in common: they are both fairly common, often recurrent, and can be very painful. However, there are some important differences.

Canker Sores (mouth ulcers) are strictly intraoral which means that they occur only within the mouth. Canker sores are not contagious, but there is uncertainty about their actual cause.

Fever blisters (cold sores) are preceded by small blisters called vesicles. Fever blisters usually occur on the outside of the mouth, although they can sometimes occur inside the mouth. When they do occur on the inside of the mouth, fever blisters appear on bound (non-movable) areas such as the roof of the mouth. Fever blisters are caused by a virus and are contagious.