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By Word of Mouth

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Preventive Care.....	1
Invisalign®	2
Laser Precision: Good News for Dental Patients.....	2
“All White Smile” Special.....	3
Oral Cancer	3
Oral Cancer Signs.....	3
Dental Care: Prevent More Than Caries.....	4

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Dental Care: Prevent More Than Cavities

More and more we are learning that prevention of periodontal (gum) disease, the leading cause of adult tooth loss, is gaining new urgency as research shows that it can contribute to illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and pneumonia. Scientists believe that bacteria and inflammatory agents from the mouth can spread to the rest of the body through the bloodstream. A conscientious program of good home hygiene and regularly scheduled professional cleanings can help your overall health. Following are some areas of critical concern:

Diabetes. Gum disease and diabetes can have a reciprocal relationship. Diabetes can affect circulation, restricting blood flow to the gums. Combined with its suppression of the immune system, this can create the ideal conditions for periodontitis. Recent research indicates that treating periodontal disease can improve blood-sugar control. Some major insurance companies now offer diabetic patients extended dental care coverage for periodontal treatments.

Heart disease. Some research has found that gum disease can increase your risk of heart disease. Other data show that adults with the highest levels of some oral bacteria have thicker carotid arteries, a predictor of heart attack and stroke. Additionally, people who suffer from angina and heart attacks have higher levels of some oral bacteria. Oral bacteria are known to provoke inflammation, which may increase levels of white blood cells and C-reactive protein, which has been linked to heart disease. One study found that aggressive treatment of periodontal disease was linked to improved circulation. In another recent trial, periodontal therapy reduced patients' C-reactive protein levels.

Pneumonia. Poor oral hygiene has been shown to contribute to fatal pneumonias in hospital patients and nursing-home residents. In those settings, lax oral hygiene can foster a buildup of bacteria capable of causing respiratory infection. Institutions can avoid such infections by practicing stringent dental care, including swabbing patients' mouths with plaque-inhibiting rinses containing chlorhexidine.

Oral Care Essentials

- Eat a diet high in calcium and vitamins C and D. Avoid sugary foods: Oral bacteria ferment sugar to create tooth-eroding acids.
- Brush your teeth twice a day and floss daily to remove plaque and bacteria.
- Make sure you see us for your regularly scheduled cleanings. Patients who smoke or have gum disease or diabetes may need cleaning and checkups every 3–4 months.

Preventive Care. In these tough economic times, it may be tempting to cut corners by cutting out check-ups and cleanings—a move that can ultimately spell disaster for your family's health and pocketbook!

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General have recently released a “National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health.” A statement posted on the CDC's website (www.cdc.org) notes that “oral health is essential to general health and well-being at every stage of life.” Yet mouth and throat diseases, ranging from cavities to cancer, continue to cause pain and disability for millions of Americans each year. This fact is all the more disturbing because most oral diseases are largely preventable.



Prevention begins with solid oral hygiene habits—including consistent daily brushing and flossing—but professional maintenance is equally essential. Regularly scheduled cleanings take care of the plaque build-up that home hygiene cannot manage. Regular check-ups can help us detect problems at early stages—problems that, if left untreated, may require root canals, gum surgery and tooth removal. Good hygiene combined with a consistent maintenance program of professional cleanings and exams makes good sense, both health-wise and expense-wise.

Procrastination, in terms of health care, can ultimately prove more costly in terms of both finances and well-being. Something as straightforward as an old filling that is showing signs of weakness can lead to cracking, decay, and even loss of the tooth and gum disease if not properly dealt with in a timely manner.

It is important to remember that good oral hygiene can have far-reaching effects, not only for your dental health, but for your overall well-being as well. Neglect can lead to gum disease and tooth loss. More and more studies link oral health problems with other conditions, including diabetes, stroke, hypertension and heart disease.

If you have any questions about care and maintenance, please don't hesitate to call us at (727) 397-6611 and ask any of our knowledgeable and caring team—that's what we are here for. If you cannot afford “ideal” dentistry, there are many options to maintain your dental health. We will work with you to develop a plan to keep you in a “holding pattern” to prevent further decline. Together, we can help you maintain your natural, healthy teeth for as long as possible so that you can enjoy the beauty and comfort of good dental health for many years to come.

Set your smile free with **invisalign®**!

Want to straighten your teeth, but not wear braces? Invisalign® clear aligners offer the perfect solution for many of our patients! Here are some of the advantages that Invisalign® clear aligners can offer:

- Made of clear polymer material—most people won't even know you're wearing them
- Smooth material is comfortable in your mouth
- Conveniently removable for eating, brushing, etc. Just reinsert when ready
- Cost is comparable to traditional metal braces
- Treatment time is the same or faster than traditional braces
- Custom molded to fit your smile

Invisalign has proven to be effective in clinical research as well as practices nationwide. Over a quarter million people are already smiling more thanks to Invisalign. An examination and consultation are necessary to evaluate each patient's individual needs. Call today to learn more about how clear aligners can give you a reason to smile!



Laser Precision: Good News for Dental Patients.

The benefits of laser dentistry offer our patients some of the most exciting news to come along in many years. Reduced treatment time, less pain, quicker recovery with less risk of infection, and reduced need for pain relief or antibiotics are just some of the reasons we're excited that laser technology has come to dentistry.

BENEFITS OF LASER DENTISTRY

Accuracy. Laser dentistry allows us to shape and remove diseased soft gum tissues with unparalleled accuracy, even in hard to reach recesses within periodontal pockets. Tissue can also be shaped for crown placements. Due to the high degree of accuracy and control, the need for sutures (stitches) is often eliminated. Laser precision also minimizes damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

Faster Healing. Infections are reduced because the high-energy beam sterilizes tissues, destroying bacteria during the procedure. Wounds heal more quickly and tissues can be regenerated.

Less pain. Most patients experience considerably less pain and discomfort with laser dentistry. The need for anesthesia may be eliminated for some procedures. Pain medications following a procedure are also often reduced.

Less bleeding. Gum tissue can often be removed without bleeding and swelling as the powerful light beam seals blood vessels and nerve endings.

Safety. Laser dentistry is as safe as dentistry with traditional instruments. Although technological advancements continue to refine them, lasers have been in use in the dental field since the 1990s. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has determined that lasers are a safe and effective tool for the treatment of a broad range of conditions for both adults and children.

USES OF LASER DENTISTRY

• **Laser Periodontal Procedure:** Non-invasive, gentle alternative to traditional gum surgery. Laser periodontal surgery eliminates up to 99% of bacteria that cause gum disease, while preserving much more of healthy gum tissue than traditional surgery.

• **Tooth Sensitivity:** Dental lasers may be used to seal tubules on the root of the tooth that cause hot and cold tooth sensitivity.

• **Crown Lengthening:** Dr. Massaro can reshape gum tissue as well as bone to expose healthier tooth structure. This



reshaping creates a stronger foundation for restorations.

• **Gummy Smiles:** Dr. Massaro can reshape gum tissue to expose healthy tooth structure and improve the appearance of a gummy smile.

• **Muscle Attachment (Frenula):** A laser frenectomy can release muscle attachments which interfere with healthy gums. This procedure can be done in minutes with no sutures or incisions. A laser frenectomy may also help to eliminate speech impediments.

• **Soft Tissue Folds (Epulis):** Dental lasers may be used for the painless and suture-free removal of soft tissue folds often caused by ill-fitting dentures. This



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Want to have more than an **All Right Smile?**
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We'll make it easy for you. With this special offer, Take **10% Off** when you replace up to 2 silver fillings with white fillings or crowns. Or Take **15% Off** when you replace 3 or more.*

Call 727-397-6611 today to take advantage of this limited offer!

*Must be infection-free. Exam & x-rays may be required. Discount percentage based on patient portion of payment. Offer good for treatments done in one visit.

Oral Cancer: Early Detection is Key to Success

Every hour someone in America dies from oral cancer. Shockingly, recent statistics published by the American Cancer Society show that while the incidence and death rates for cancers overall has decreased, the mortality rate associated with oral cancer has not improved significantly in the last 40 years. In 2007, the rate of occurrence rose by an alarming 11%, and the death rate in the U.S. from oral cancer is higher than that of other, more widely publicized cancers such as breast, cervical, prostate, Hodgkin's and many others.

A number of risk factors are associated with the disease, from poor nutrition to human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, but tobacco and alcohol use are the primary lifestyle risk factors. Smokers are 6 times more likely than non-smokers to develop oral cancers, and smokers who drink alcohol increase their chances even more. 25% of oral cancer patients, however, have no known risk factors.

Early detection is the key deciding factor in life expectancy. Oral cancer is 90% curable when found in its early stages. Yet 70% of oral cancers are diagnosed in the late stages, leading to a five-year survival rate of 57%. The statistics don't lie: the primary reason for the high death rate among oral cancer patients is failure to detect it in its early stages.

Regular dental checkups that include an examination of the entire mouth are important in helping to find oral and oropharyngeal cancers (and precancers) early. We include an oral cancer screening as part of our routine dental check-ups with each patient. We also recommend that you check your own oral tissues monthly to keep an eye out for signs of the disease (please see chart below for some oral cancer signs).

Oral cancer screenings include a thorough visual and manual examination of all soft tissues of the mouth. Harmful oral spots or sores often look identical to harmless ones, but testing can tell them apart. If you have a sore with a likely cause, we may treat it and ask you to return for re-examination.

We may also take samples of tissue or cells in any suspicious areas to send to the lab for computer-assisted analysis. Using a simple, painless procedure, we collect cells from tiny white or red spots that are commonly seen during an oral examination. If precancerous cells are detected, lesions can be removed surgically long before they become harmful.

Education, awareness and regular check-ups are your greatest allies in detecting suspicious signs that can prevent precancerous cells from developing further. Our staff are always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please call us at (727) 397-6611.



Oral Cancer Signs

Many of these signs can be caused by other cancers or by less serious, benign problems.

It is important to consult your dentist or your doctor if any of these conditions lasts more than 2 weeks.

- a sore in the mouth that does not heal (most common symptom)
- numbness of the tongue or other area of the mouth
- pain in the mouth that doesn't go away (also very common)
- swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- a persistent lump or thickening in the cheek
- loosening of the teeth or pain around the teeth or jaw
- a persistent white or red patch on the gums, tongue, tonsil, or lining of the mouth
- voice changes
- a sore throat or a feeling that something is caught in the throat that doesn't go away
- a lump or mass in the neck
- difficulty chewing or swallowing
- weight loss
- difficulty moving the jaw or tongue
- persistent bad breath

About 90% of patients diagnosed with oral cancer use tobacco. Please visit the American Dental Association at www.ada.org for resources to help you quit smoking.

