

TOOTHFULLY. *speaking*



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YOU DON'T KNOW... WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW!

This could have been a quote by anyone's wise grandmother on the numerous aspects of life. But in fact, the first time I heard this was in specialty school from one particular professor who had a wickedly dry sense of humour on all aspects "teeth". He incessantly droned on about "knowledge and education" but it became crystal clear that "knowledge was power" and that the more I studied everything pertaining to my specialty, the more I would understand! Not rocket science you know!

On the other hand, how are you to educate yourself on things outside of your realm? Well ... easy ask someone who is a specialist in THAT field!

April is oral health month and I don't mean to sound facetious - but this is definitely the month to celebrate the "tooth fairy" which is truly the only superhero(ine) that dentistry has to offer the world as of today.

There are so many aspects of oral health, unlike in medical health, that CAN BE identified and diagnosed before YOU feel or know anything is wrong. Early diagnosis results in an excellent treatment success rate. This is the premise of oral health month: bring awareness that dentists are doctors of the mouth. On examination, we not only focus on teeth, but also the health of the tongue, the cheeks, the floor of the mouth and the gums, check your TMJoints, misalignment of teeth and jaws, snoring/breathing and sinus issues, grinding or clenching habits which we all experience by the way - it is not just stress related. All dentists and hygienists routinely do oral cancer screenings, gum disease checks, check for cracking or leaking fillings or crowns, examine for mobile and sensitive teeth.

There are so many subtle and minor changes that can be known very early before the problem of a cavity becomes a root canal, for example. The more frequently you keep to a regular dental health protocol, the more chance I have as a clinician to catch something before it becomes a big deal! Big deals become expensive and more time consuming. The metaphor of life - don't ignore the rattle in the car engine, the engine eventually falls out.

And just because something doesn't "hurt" in the mouth..... does not mean that everything is always fine. I hear this comment at least daily in my office. Dental pain is a late indicator of a problem. Periodontal disease DOES not hurt and results in complete tooth loss. Oral Cancer doesn't hurt but can result in death. Root fractures don't hurt and result in inevitable tooth loss. Resorbing (i.e. idiopathic unexplained dissolving teeth) don't hurt but certainly leads to tooth loss.

So in this month of celebrating the tooth fairy ~ which is actually quite ironic ~ before you lose a tooth and have to pay your dentist for the privilege of restoring your oral health, ask them questions on what you don't know because they DO know or will KNOW to refer you to the specialist who does KNOW. Happy Brushing!



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