



# REDWOOD DENTAL

ISSUE 2 | 2012

## Why You Need Dental Cleaning



### The Case for Dental Care

Not taking care of your teeth can lead to serious, and even deadly, health problems. Read on to see just what good things you can accomplish if you take the time to see your dentist twice a year for a checkup and dental cleaning.

### You can catch oral cancer early

The Oral Cancer Foundation has said that one person dies of oral cancer every hour. That works out to 8,760 people every year. (Tobacco users represent a staggering 70-80% of those who are diagnosed.) Your dentist may not mention screening you, but if you have it and the dentist catches it early, the cure rate is close to 75%.

### You can prevent your gums from becoming sore and infected

If your gums are infected, you may suffer some bone loss around your teeth, and you may lose some teeth. It's cute when an eight-year-old has that classic, toothless grin while waiting for the adult teeth to grow in. It's not so cute to lose teeth later on. So stack the odds in your favor:

- Get dental cleanings.
- Have regular checkups.
- Floss daily.
- Brush; ideally, every time you eat. If you can't manage that, aim for at least twice a day.
- Use some antibacterial mouthwash on a regular basis.

### You can prevent heart problems

Doctors have established a connection between gum disease, heart disease, and strokes. They don't completely understand the link, but current

thinking is that when you have gum disease, you also have extra bacteria in your mouth. That bacteria doesn't just stay in your mouth; it moves to other parts of your body.

### Visits to the dentist will be more pleasant

If the dentist finds small cavities, early evidence of gum disease, and recently broken fillings, it's not a big deal to take care of them. Later on, however, you might be looking at root canals, surgery on your gums, and lost teeth. Not only are these conditions much more difficult, they're also more expensive. You are better off just getting the care you need as early as possible.

### Your dental hygienist can coach you on good oral care

Talking regularly to your dental hygienist can keep you on track when it comes to taking care of your teeth. It's a little like having a coach. If you aren't doing a good job brushing or flossing, the hygienist will see that and can give you some pointers on how to do a better job. If your gums have gotten healthier, the hygienist can tell you that, too. It's good to receive encouragement and feedback about how your teeth are doing.

### You can figure out how to pay for your care

If you are fortunate enough to have insurance, there's a good chance it covers most or all of the cost for checking and cleaning your teeth every six months. If you don't have insurance, or if the cost of what needs to be done is more than the money you have to pay for it, the dentist will probably be happy to work with you to figure out the finances.

The goal is to keep your teeth healthy. Let the dentist work with you to achieve that goal. If you don't have the cash, but you are willing to discuss the options, you can probably figure out a way to pay for the help you need.

### You can have a bright smile and sweet breath

As you age, chances are your teeth may become stained. The dentist can help you with that. And if you have a problem with bad breath, 85% of the time the problem has to do with your oral hygiene. Take good care of your mouth, and it will probably smell better, too. ❁

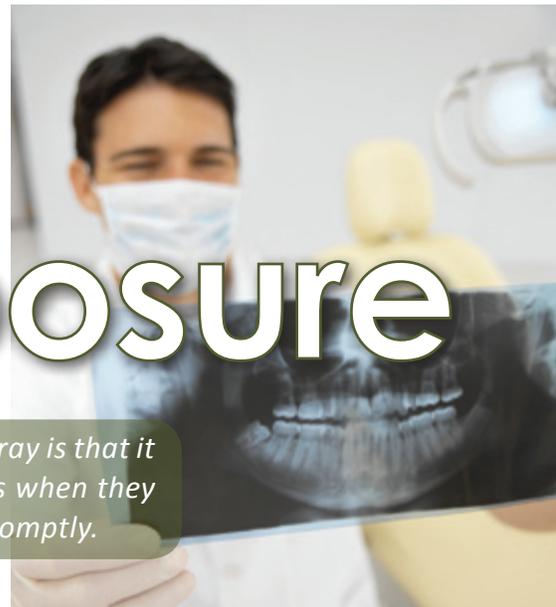


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# Digital X-ray exposure



## Finding a Balance

Completely eliminating your exposure to radiation is not just impractical; it's impossible. We are exposed to radiation every day. In a given year, the average person is exposed to about 360 mrem (mrem is actually a millirem, which is a unit of radiation) just from background radiation. This radiation comes from a variety of sources and varies according to different lifestyles. Flying in airplanes, living in brick buildings, spending time outside and even sleeping next to someone exposes us to radiation on a daily basis. At the same time, it is a good idea to minimize your exposure as much as possible in order to limit damage to your cells.

The first issue to be concerned about is the amount and frequency of radiation. The good news about having dental x-rays done is that the amount of radiation necessary is extremely small, which means the risk is correspondingly small. The federal government has set the annual occupational exposure limit of radiation at 5,000 mrem. This means the entire body is safely exposed to radiation limits at or below 5,000 mrem per year. However, even with all the background exposure of an average person, you would have to receive about 140 X-rays in a year to reach 5,000 mrem.

*The greatest benefit to having an x-ray is that it allows your dentist to see problems when they are small, and take care of them promptly.*

## Why Dentists Value Dental X-rays

The greatest benefit to having an x-ray is that it allows your dentist to see problems when they are small, and take care of them promptly. An x-ray can reveal decay between the teeth or under a filling; it can tell your dentist that you have a bone infection or periodontal disease, tumors, cysts or abscesses, and developmental abnormalities.

If you have ever had dental work done, you know that the earlier a problem is caught, the less painful and traumatic it is to treat. Doing necessary work early might even be the difference between success and a permanent problem. An x-ray makes that early work possible.

## Being Careful

Each situation is different, however, we do everything possible to minimize excess x-rays and when x-rays are taken, we ensure that all our patients are exposed to as little radiation as possible.

If you have a complicating situation, like pregnancy, you should discuss the benefits and risks with our office before making a final decision. However, waiting is not necessarily the best decision; for example, an untreated dental infection can hurt the baby as well as the mother. Likewise, we take extra care with our young patients.

We have invested in the latest technology which can do more with less radiation. By keeping your preventative appointments and being vigilant in your twice-per-year cleanings, you help us in not needing as many x-rays, because we are familiar with your dental history and care.

If you have additional concerns, we invite you to discuss them with our staff. In most cases, the benefits of dental x-rays far outweigh any health risks. 🌿



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# Toothbrush

*Improper brushing can be destructive, damaging the very teeth and gums that we're trying to keep healthy.*

**W**e all know that we need to brush and floss every day. Proper brushing removes plaque, food debris, and bacteria from our teeth. Improper brushing, though, can be destructive, damaging the very teeth and gums that we're trying to keep healthy.

## What causes toothbrush abrasion?

Toothbrush abrasion is caused by improper brushing. As strange as it may seem, teeth and gums are fragile tissues. Improper brushing can cause destructive problems like:

- ◆ Receding gums
- ◆ Wearing away of tooth structure at the gum line
- ◆ Sensitive teeth
- ◆ Weaker teeth

## How to brush properly

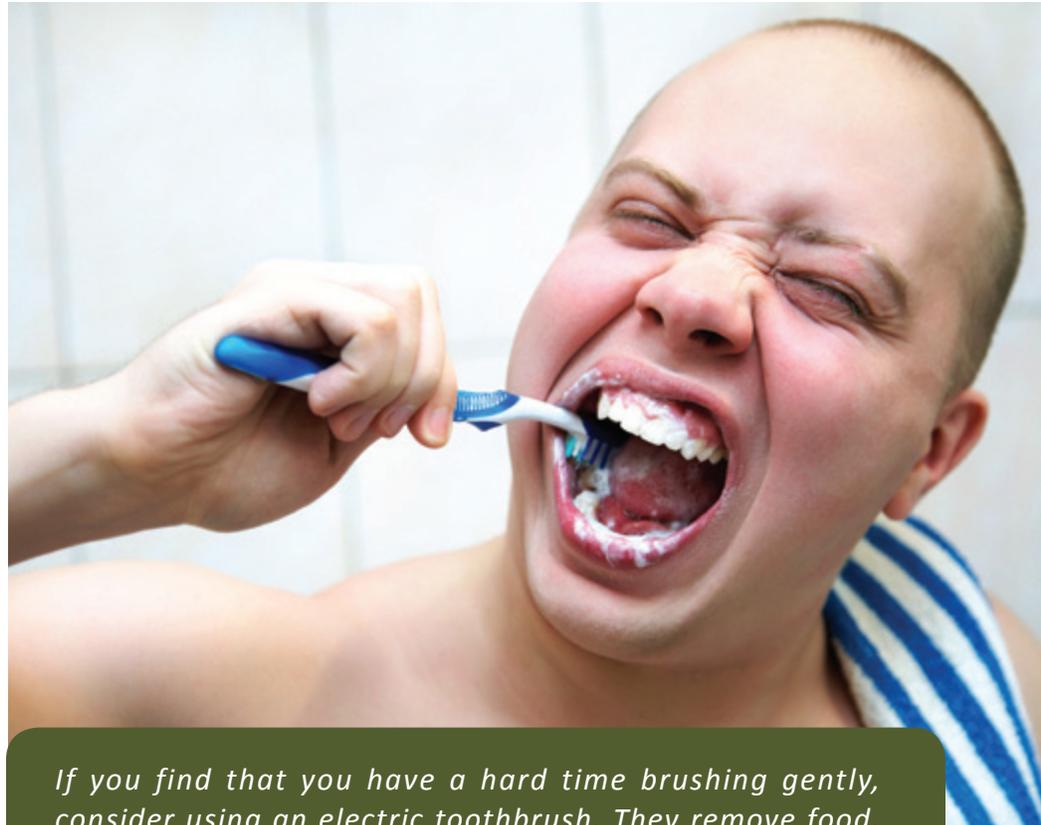
**Proper tooth brushing involves these three things:**

**A soft toothbrush** - Use a soft toothbrush. A soft toothbrush also makes it much easier to remove the plaque below the gum line, where periodontal disease starts.

### **A non-abrasive toothpaste with fluoride** -

Use a pea-sized amount of non-abrasive toothpaste with fluoride. Fluoride hardens the outer enamel layer of teeth, may stop a developing cavity, and gives you more resistance to future cavities. Toothpastes that are labeled "whitening" or "tartar control" can sometimes be too rough on receding gums and exposed roots, wearing away the root's protective layer. You can be sure a toothpaste is non-abrasive if it's labeled "sensitive."

**Good brushing technique** - Use proper brushing technique. Angle the bristles



*If you find that you have a hard time brushing gently, consider using an electric toothbrush. They remove food, bacteria, and plaque very well, and they make it much easier to use less pressure.*

of the brush along the gum line at a 45 degree angle and apply just enough pressure so the bristles slide under the gum line. Vibrate the brush while you move it in short back and forth strokes and in small circular motions. Don't brush too hard. If you're not sure whether you're pressing too hard, try holding the brush with two fingers. That's all the force the brush needs to remove bacteria from the gum line. Here's another tip: if your brush bristles have bent over with time, you probably have been pressing too hard.

If you find that you have a hard time brushing gently, consider using an electric toothbrush. They remove food, bacteria, and plaque very well, and they make it much easier to use less pressure. These days, some advanced electric toothbrushes will even stop or alert you when you are pressing too hard.

And don't forget to floss. Brushing harder won't get bacteria out from between the teeth. 🌸

# Braces

## Not Just For the Smile!



Here at Redwood Dental Health Care, we have an orthodontic specialist in-house. If you are interested in scheduling a consultation with Dr. Knoles, call our office.

**M**any people think that braces are for kids, which isn't true. In fact, 25% of all orthodontic patients are adults. Many people also think that a better smile is the main reason behind orthodontic treatment and while a dazzling smile is important and desirable, there are other reasons, equally important for making an appointment for an orthodontic consultation.

While surveys have repeatedly shown that people who have had braces look better and feel better about themselves, surveys have also shown that people with braces live longer and have a statistically lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

There are a number of reasons why people need and should consider braces. These reasons can range from the extreme need for braces and orthodontic work to the simple and cosmetic needs of people who just want a prettier smile.

Most commonly, people need braces to:

- **Straighten teeth:** Teeth that are crooked or misaligned can lead to larger problems in the jaw and even cause headaches and backaches.
- **Bite correction:** Many people have over bites, which is when the upper jaw extends the teeth too far forward. There are also people with under bites, when the bottom teeth jut out farther than the upper teeth. Both of these bites are bad for the jaw as the bites can lead to tension in the jaw and will keep you from biting properly. Deep over bites and under bites can also cause bone damage.

- **Cosmetic reasons:** Some people don't really need braces, but get them anyway because they want to improve the look of their smile. Many people think that only perfectly straight teeth are pretty and are willing to undergo the years of orthodontic work in order to have a "perfect" smile.
- **Digestion:** When your teeth are crooked, they might not bite or chew through your food correctly and this could lead to upset stomachs.
- **Breathing Problems:** Breathing problems can develop as you get older and the roof of your mouth changes. If your teeth are straight and aligned properly, breathing will improve.

Here at Redwood Dental Health Care, we have an orthodontic specialist in-house. If you are interested in scheduling a consultation with Dr. Knoles, call our office. 🌲

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with Dr. Dennis B. Knoles,  
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