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The Daily Smile

Continuity is the key. One of the things we think separates us from other offices is the length of time our staff has been with us. Between the two offices, the average tenure for an employee is 15 years! Believe it or not, the national average for dental staff turnover is 18 months. We have staff members who have been in the dental profession for over 40 years.

We pride ourselves on having highly skilled, well-trained staff. You will always see a familiar face when you step into our office!

-Mike

Washington Dental Service Changes

Nearly half of our patients have their dental insurance through WDS. In June, they made a dramatic change in the way they handle reimbursements. WDS was founded by dentists as a non-profit insurance company in efforts to provide a high quality dental plan to employers. In the last few years, dentists who were sitting on the WDS board have been pushed out and it appears WDS is taking a new tack. Profitability and lowering services appears to be their new agenda. What was once the gold standard in dental insurance in this state, is now one of the worst plans available. They are stating they made these changes to be more competitive, however, they have not reduced premiums for employers, have made it very difficult to process claims meanwhile, record record profits. Last year their CEO received over 1.5 million in compensation. Not bad for a non-profit huh?

There has been a push in the dental community to stop participating with WDS. We have always accepted all insurances, and will continue to be a WDS premier provider. We are not contracted providers with many PPO dental plans. You can still come see us, we will bill your insurance for you, but there may be a small out of pocket expense due to us being out of network. Occasionally, we will lose a family because of their employer changing insurance. More often than not, they come back. We are not a high volume, production based dental office. We are a group of healthcare providers who are very passionate about keeping their patients healthy and doing great dentistry! Our conservative approach will most likely save you more money in the long run, as opposed to an office that relies on volume to make up for the reduced fees.

Baby's First Steps to a Healthy Mouth

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay affects children in the United States more than any other chronic infectious disease, highlighting the need for thorough oral care and regular dental visits. The ideal time for a child to visit the dentist is six months after the child's first teeth erupt. During this initial visit, a dentist will be able to examine the development of the child's mouth.

It is possible for your child to develop tooth decay and cavities as soon as their teeth first appear. Commonly described as baby bottle decay, which is caused by the long-term exposure to liquids containing sugars like milk, formula, and fruit juice.

In addition to tooth decay, other dental problems, such as teething irritations, gum disease, and prolonged thumb or pacifier sucking, often start early. The sooner the child visits a dentist, the better.

There are many things that parents can do with their child at home to maintain good oral health:

- 1 Clean your infant's gums with a clean, damp cloth twice a day.
- 2 Ask your physician when you may begin to rub a tiny dab of toothpaste on your child's gums. Doing so will help your child become accustomed to the flavor of toothpaste.
- 3 As soon as the first teeth come in, begin brushing them with a small, soft-bristled toothbrush and a pea-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste.
- 4 Help a young child brush at night, which is the most important time to brush, due to lower salivary flow during sleep and higher susceptibility to cavities and plaque.
- 5 By approximately age 5, your child can learn to brush his or her teeth with proper parental instruction and supervision.

Heartburn and your Teeth

Do you have heartburn? Did you know it can have an adverse effect on your teeth? Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD, or "acid reflux") is a disorder where the valve connecting the esophagus and the stomach weakens. Upon weakening, the acids in the stomach that are used for digestion flow back up into your throat and can continue into the mouth. GERD, or what you may commonly describe as "heartburn" or "indigestion," can cause erosion of your tooth enamel. The digestive acids that are introduced into the oral cavity can cause your tooth structure to dissolve. As your enamel is worn away from the stomach acids, the softer inner part of your tooth is exposed leading to more rapid breakdown. This may require extensive dental treatment.

If you are currently being treated for GERD or suffer from symptoms of indigestion, please let us know! We can keep the situation from getting worse. If the symptoms are frequent or severe, you should also advise your medical doctor. In the meantime, you can follow these simple suggestions to minimize the damage to your teeth:

- *avoid brushing your teeth immediately after a Reflux episode, so as not to wear away the weakened enamel*
- *chew sugar free gum to stimulate saliva production, in order to buffer the acid*
- *ask us about additional mouth rinses and toothpastes to protect your teeth.*

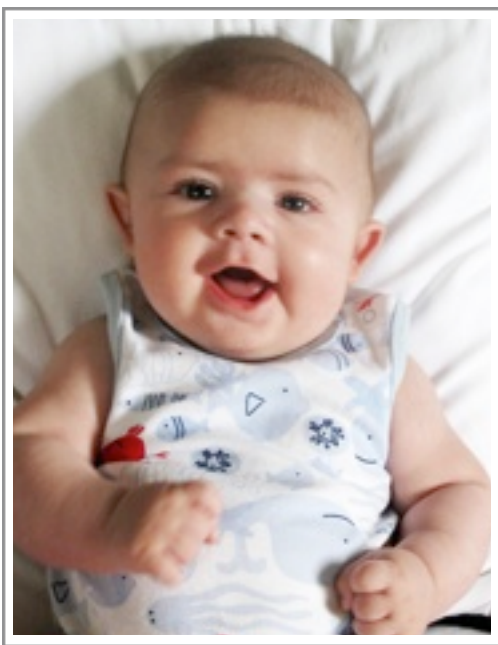


That was a Filling?

If you've had a filling here in the office recently, you may have been surprised at how quickly the procedure was done. As you know, we continually try to utilize the most advanced equipment and materials available. SonicFill is a composite filling delivery device that, through ultrasonic vibration, liquefies the composite as we're placing it into your tooth. This allows us to place it all in one step. This results in a more dense, void free filling that is placed in half the time!

Baby Kai has Arrived!

This newsletter took a little longer to compile than the last two. My wife and I had our first child, and needless to say, our lives will never be the same! Kai was born on February 2nd. He came a month early, but took no time in catching up. He was twenty pounds at six months and loves to eat! We are having an absolute blast and he is even sleeping through the night.



GERALD NOTICED THAT ONE OF HIS TEETH WAS BECOMING SENSITIVE TO THE COLD

You Are My Sunshine My Only Sunshine...

Like any good mother, when Karen found out that another baby was on the way, she did what she could to help her 3-year-old son, Michael, prepare for a new sibling. They found out that the new baby was going to be a girl, and day after day, night after night, Michael sang to his sister in mommy's tummy. He was building a bond of love with his little sister before he even met her.

The pregnancy progressed normally for Karen, in time, the labor pains came. Soon it was every five minutes, every three, every minute. But serious complications arose during delivery and Karen found herself in hours of labor. Would a C-section be required? Finally, after a long struggle, Michael's little sister was born. But she was in very serious condition. With a siren howling in the night, the ambulance rushed the infant to the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Mary's Hospital, Knoxville, Tennessee.

The days inched by. The little girl got worse. The pediatrician had to tell the parents there is very little hope. Be prepared for the worst. Karen and her husband contacted a local cemetery about a burial plot. They had fixed up a special room in their house for their new baby but now they found themselves having to plan for a funeral.

Michael however, kept begging his parents to let him see his sister. I want to sing to her, he kept saying. Week two in intensive care looked as if a funeral would come before the week was over. Michael kept nagging about singing to his sister, but kids are never allowed in Intensive Care. Karen decided to take Michael whether they liked it or not.

If he didn't see his sister right then, he may never see her alive. She dressed him in an oversized scrub suit and marched him into ICU. He looked like a walking laundry basket. The head nurse recognized him as a child and bellowed, 'Get that kid out of here now. No children are allowed!' The mother rose up strong in Karen, and the usually mild-mannered lady glared steel-eyed right into the head nurse's face, her lips a firm line. 'He is not leaving until he sings to his sister' she stated. Then Karen towed Michael to his sister's bedside.

He gazed at the tiny infant losing the battle to live. After a moment, he began to sing. In the pure-hearted voice of a 3-year-old, Michael sang:

'You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are gray.' Instantly the baby girl seemed to respond. The pulse rate began to calm down and become steady. 'Keep on singing, Michael,' encouraged Karen with tears in her eyes. 'You never know, dear, how much I love you, please don't take my sunshine away.' As Michael sang to his sister, the baby's ragged, strained breathing became as smooth as a kitten's purr. 'Keep on singing, sweetheart.' 'The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping, I dreamed I held you in my arms' Michael's little sister began to relax as rest, healing rest, seemed to sweep over her.

'Keep on singing, Michael.' Tears had now conquered the face of the bossy head nurse. Karen glowed. 'You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. Please don't take my sunshine away.' The next day, the very next day. The little girl was well enough to go home

Woman's Day Magazine called it the miracle of a brother's song.

The medical staff just called it a miracle.

Never give up on the people you love.