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Dentists battle a triple threat

to dental health every day. While you are probably familiar with two of these diseases, the third is not well understood by most dentists or the public at large!

Dentistry has won the war against one formally prevalent disease, tooth decay and, in so doing, almost put itself out of business! Tooth decay involves the breakdown of tooth structure by bacterial acidic wastes that appear in your mouth when you munch on carbohydrates. Tooth decay has all but been eradicated in the U.S by topical and ingested fluoride which strengthens teeth to prevent breakdown. This generation's youth experience in dentistry involves braces, also known as orthodontics, and bleaching. Decay may reappear in middle age with saliva lessening but, again, fluoride topically administered comes to the rescue. Fillings are still done today, but nothing like before fluoride was first used.

Periodontal disease, on the other hand, is on the rise, but that's a consequence of preserving so many more teeth from advanced destruction from decay. We simply have helped more people keep their teeth. Periodontal disease is a battlefield between bacteria and our body defenses. The breakdown of supporting structures of gum and bone is the result. Cleanings, like brushing and flossing, keep teeth free of bacteria, bacterial by-products, plaque and calcified plaque (tartar).

Dental Care Basics

By Dr. Thomas J. Dwork

Our genetics, diet and state of health determine our susceptibility to its onslaught.

Today we understand that periodontal disease activity is related to cardiovascular disease! The oral cavity is intimately linked to total health! The signs and symptoms of active periodontal disease involve bleeding gums, loosening teeth and foul breath.


The final battle that most dentists fail to address is occlusal disease. Basically how the teeth fit together and how roughly we use our teeth affects and stresses the bone, the teeth and the jaw joints themselves. Many of us have friends or perhaps you yourself suffer from "TMJ" symptoms, headaches, and the like.

Many of us suffer from bruxism, which is the clenching and grinding of our teeth. Over time, bruxism wears our teeth and ruins our bite, stresses and overloads our jaw joints, ruins the supporting structures of bone, thus loosening our teeth. Advanced wear may cause esthetic defect due to loss of the vertical height of the face!

Solutions for occlusal disease may involve: a plastic bite splint to slow down tooth wear and align the bite to alleviate stress in the TMJs. A bite adjustment can help to even out the bite. Or the situation might be so advanced that a full mouth reconstruction with veneers and crowns may be the final answer or, perhaps, a combination of all three treatments.

Signs of occlusal disease include worn or fractured teeth, loosening of teeth, TMJ clicking, pain, muscle spasm or headaches, frequent toothaches and

the need for root canals. Perhaps the most telling is the ongoing fracture of new dental restorations.

If you look in the mirror and your front teeth are worn, or worse, they are disappearing (if you don't know, look at old photos of yourself), then you need to see a Dentist knowledgeable about your occlusal issues! Advanced tooth wear is not a natural consequence of aging. Like a car, you may have worn yourself out of alignment! 

—Dr. Thom Dwork is a dental specialist, a prosthodontist, who has advanced education in advanced complex dentistry. He has practiced for fifteen years in Jupiter at his practice, Aesthetic Dental of Jupiter. Dr. Dwork teaches and lectures to other dentists about performing "smile make-overs" and implant prosthesis. For a journey through the procedures routinely performed at our office, please visit our website at www.aestheticdentalofjupiter.com or call us at 561-575-5599.



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