

That Scourge Called Periodontal Disease

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Short Communication

Though one hears the word perfect often, we hardly ever use it because we know better. Scourge, on the other hand, is a word one rarely hears and one we rarely use. Most do not know what it means and fewer still cannot spell it properly. It denotes and connotes terrible, horrific and similar definitions. It aptly fits Periodontal Disease.

We here highlight this often ignored affliction and endeavor to bring it to the attention of a public silently besieged and crippled by it. Periodontal disease is a devastating affliction. Dentists do not ever tell their patients how to get rid of it because they really don't know how to stop it. Not that it can't be stopped or cured or eliminated; it's just that the doctors who treat it never stop to think about what they are doing or the science behind the problem or the causes of the illness (it is most certainly an illness). What the doctors do is what they are told to do and what they are told has little to do with the research and the reality of the disease process. The reason one has periodontal disease is that the teeth are not clean – and poor nutrition makes it worse. What is done in today's world of treatment is to have the patient return every three months or so to have what is called maintenance therapy, which is a euphemism for cleaning the teeth. This keeps you coming back and paying money to the dentist on a regular basis (like an annuity into the dentist's pocket). The problem with that is it never gets rid of the disease so the process is a lifetime affair and you will continue to suffer infections, abscesses, tooth extractions and emergencies during the course of your lifetime treatment. However, the problems will occur so far apart in time that it will seem as though the treatment is working during those quiet times. It isn't.

In the end, you will have spent a lot of money, spent a lot of time in the dentist's office and will still find that, when you become older (the worst time in your life for it to happen), you will have lost all or most of your teeth.

When you return for those 3-month treatments, your teeth are in need of a cleaning. What no one ever tells you is that your teeth were dirty the day before that visit; and the day before that; and the day before that. In fact, your teeth are clean only the days they are cleaned in the dentist's office: Only 4 days of 365! No wonder few people ever get better.

Everyone knows the current treatment does not work. That's why implants are so quickly recommended when teeth begin to suffer from periodontal disease. That's why implants are so popular. Not only does treatment not work so the dentist gives you the *may as well remove the teeth now and place implants* speech but the dentist makes a lot of money from implant therapy. Although it is really quite a set-up for the dentist, it is not good for the patient because the destructive forces that caused the loss of natural teeth are never stopped and the implants will succumb to the same problems that caused the natural teeth to be lost.

In the profession, the expression one hears is that the patient traded periodontitis (disease around the teeth) for periimplantitis (disease around the implant). However, just as it took many years for the natural teeth to succumb, so it also takes some time before the implants fail. And the major causes: uncleanliness and poor nutrition.

As you can see, nowhere along the line is either of the 2 causes properly addressed. One (cleanliness) is woefully poorly addressed and the other, poor nutrition, not at all.

In essence, unclean teeth causes the problem and poor nutrition makes it worse.

It is not a good idea to allow an infection to remain in one's body because it affects the entire body and not just the area of the infection. On that note, periodontal disease has been linked to some of our most serious medical problems:

- Cancer
 - Arthritis
- Periodontal disease
is not a disease of
just the mouth.

- Diabetes
- Inflammation
- Respiratory ailments
- Alzheimer's disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- Pregnancy and birthing problems and many others.

Having periodontal disease is not a good thing. What is certainly true about any disease is that it is never caused by one thing. There is always a list of circumstances that allow a disease to materialize and sustain. It's also very true with periodontal disease. Even though you may have a genetic possibility for developing gum disease, certain factors must usually also be present to allow the disease to develop. If those factors are not present, possibility never becomes reality. The major factor is the presence of plaque; a soft, sticky substance that forms every day on everyone's teeth.

NOTE: The word "plaque" has been replaced by the more scientific-sounding word "biofilm" even though nothing has changed in the biologic systems of the mouth and the name change does not at all change the disease factors nor the effectiveness of the therapy.

Periodontal (the gum and bone around the tooth) disease should be considered for the ugly, destructive, quietly invasive disease that it is. Cells of the body have gone awry and, for some reason, they are slowly destroying the bone supporting the teeth. The body is responding and is blatantly obvious in its colorful (red), swollen appearance of the gums. Blood and pus ooze from crevices in advancing stages.

In general:

Tooth decay (cavities) is a disease of poor nutrition.

Gum disease is a disease of not keeping your teeth clean.

They are separate kinds of problems.

A periodontally infected person must fight the disease for a lifetime. You must first take note that this is a vile disease or its destruction will go unchecked; its backburner personality will continue and those who are charged with handling this problem will be held accountable when the ravages of the disease are tallied. The only way to easily overcome this disease is the frequent and effective brushing of one's teeth. Periodontal disease is a cruel disease. It makes one look old, is often embarrassing (it usually is the cause of notably bad breath), certainly is not healthy and it usually gets worse because people do not do the easy things when the easy things are most powerful. Every disease has its weak points. Our techniques attack the weak points. It is especially true of periodontal disease that: The patient who does not change the things that caused the disease will never control the disease. In order to break the hold of periodontal disease, you must change the manner in which you care for your gums. You needn't ever have gum disease. Brushing one's teeth is something each must do for oneself. No

one will do it for you. You might get someone to clean your dishes or do your ironing or even shop and cook for you but only you can clean your teeth well on a daily basis. The discipline necessary to avoid periodontal disease varies with different people. There is definitely a significant breakdown in your health if periodontal disease is permitted to advance to the point of making itself known as evidenced by loosening teeth and infected gums (redness, bleeding, pus, swelling, tenderness).

Brushing is critical and frequency of brushing is the most important factor. It is infinitely better to brush often throughout the day for 60-90 seconds each time than to brush once for five minutes. It is far more effective to use several different tooth-cleaning devices over the course of the day than to use one kind. In fact, the essence of successful, long-term periodontal control is the daily brushing of your teeth – often and with different instruments. Although flossing is probably not needed, nutritional status, professional care and home care are deeply important. Still, there is nothing as powerful as the frequent brushing of your teeth. If we again and again repeat the importance of frequency of brushing, it would not be enough. It is your disease. If you do not change your habits, the disease will only get worse. Have you ever heard the adage pertaining to women that: for every childbirth, you lose a tooth? Many years ago, when women became pregnant, so many of them suffered from bleeding gums that doctors named the malady *Pregnancy Gingivitis* (gum disease – mostly bleeding gums – that occurs during pregnancy and usually resolves after the pregnancy is over). During this time, the problem in the mouth often became so bad that a tooth (or teeth) had to be extracted. Of course, there is always an underlying, pre-pregnancy, existing gum problem. Because of several factors, pregnancy causes the gum situation to worsen; often with radical results - - - losing teeth is considered radical. Today, doctors still see the malady and say it's normal. What nonsense! Bleeding gums is never normal. If it were normal, every pregnant woman would have it and many don't. If it were normal, then doctors should be concerned about the pregnant women who do not have gingivitis because they would be abnormal.

Bleeding gums during pregnancy may be average or common but it certainly is not normal. It's a sign that something is wrong. Bleeding from any part of the body is a cardinal sign and the doctor's responsibility is to address the problem and find out why it's happening. It is definitely not "normal." When you wash your hands, do they bleed? Of course not. If they did, you'd be alarmed and would know something is not right. Healthy tissue does not bleed upon slight provocation and gums that bleed when slightly provoked (toothbrushing is slight provocation) is a sign that should not be ignored and should not be fluffed off as being normal. It is not part of a healthy picture.

Gums bleed for only two reasons.

1. The teeth are dirty and the buildup on the teeth causes the gums to become irritated and swollen and infected. The area becomes

engorged with capillaries and these tiny blood vessels break when slightly touched.

2. There is a systemic problem (pregnancy is not considered a “problem”) causing the capillary walls to be weak and unable to withstand even the slightest touch so they break easily.

Both reasons may be and are likely active.

When the mother-to-be reports bleeding gums and the teeth are being kept clean, it is always a systemic problem and almost always a nutritional deficiency; usually of Vitamin C. But no one is ever deficient in just one nutrient so the problem is often deeper and should be of more concern. Pregnancy is a very stressful time to the body and stress causes the rapid and significant depletion of nutrients; especially the major stress nutrients of Vitamins C and E and, to a lesser degree, the B-Complex.