

SPRING 1999 EDITION – DR. DOI'S TALKING STORY

WHY CLEAN YOUR TONGUE?

Many patients give little thought to tongue care when dental hygiene is concerned. If you are one of them, read on. The top rear part of most tongues has a coating of millions of organisms. During the spoiling of debris on the tongue, hydrogen sulfide and methylmercaptan are produced, both of which have been related directly to oral malodor. It has been estimated that the debris in the mouth may be responsible for up to 90 percent of oral malodor. The evidence is clear that organisms are present on the tongue in enormous quantities, that these organisms contribute to halitosis and that tongue scraping or brushing reduces plaque scores in the mouth.

The last few years have brought forth scores of devices and gadgets to clean the tongue. Research has shown that toothbrushes are inferior to scraping implements in their ability to remove debris and organisms. Plaque (soft and sticky) is easier to remove from the tongue (similar to a thick rug) with a stiff instrument that will pull rather than spread the material. Brushes also seem to make patients gag easier than tongue cleaners.

Tongue cleaning procedure:

- Place tongue as far out of the mouth as possible.
- Place the tongue cleaner/scrapper as far posterior as possible and place force on the implement to flatten the tongue.
- Move the tongue cleaner forward.
- Wash off debris from tongue cleaner and repeat several times until further debris cannot be removed.

The tongue cleaning procedure is simple and fast and the benefits for most people far outweigh the small investment and time required to accomplish this procedure. You might ask, well what about mouthwash? Mouthwash may mask odor or neutralize it but the layer of sticky debris will still be there, allowing odors to return sooner.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

On January 9 of this year, I had the privilege of attending an all day workshop on Maui by Donald W. Warren, D.D.S. Dr. Warren is a Diplomat in both the American Academy of Head, Neck and Facial Pain and the American Academy of Pain Management. He is recognized as one of the top practitioners of head, neck, facial pain and Temporomandibular Joint disorders in the United States. Dr. Warren demonstrated Contact Reflex Analysis, a kinesiology technique. He uses this tool, as well as nutrition, occlusal (bite) adjustments and attention to a patient's emotional condition to help the patients overcome a wide array of problems. The course reiterated the intimate connection between a patient's oral health to the health of the whole body. I was stimulated to further my study of oral occlusion.

LASERS

It has been nearly ten years since the manufacture of the first laser made especially for dentistry. As of today, there are eight different wavelengths of lasers with dental surgical applications available in the U.S. The variety of applications include, but are not limited to, rapid curing of composite resin, activation of bleaching agents, soft tissue incisions and excisions, soft tissue contouring, periodontal sulcular curettage, hemostasis, aphthous ulcer treatment, enamel and dentin tooth preparation and carries removal. The use of lasers in dentistry has indeed come of

age. Clinical successes are well documented with case studies. New clinical applications and research are undergoing scrutiny at many universities. I was among the more than 350 international clinicians and researchers who discussed the expanding role of lasers in providing advanced dental care during the Academy of Laser Dentistry's Sixth Annual Conference and Exhibition held February 3-6, 1999, in Palm Springs, California.

This educational conference presented clinical and experimental applications of dental lasers, involving treatment of dental decay and periodontal disease, soft tissue management, intraoral soft tissue surgery, laser-assisted tooth bleaching and endodontics. The Academy of Laser Dentistry (ALD) is one of the largest international organizations devoted to laser dentistry and includes clinicians, academicians and researchers in all laser wavelengths. The ALD is devoted to clinical education, research and the development of standards and guidelines for the safe and ethical use of dental laser technology. After listening to dozens of practitioners, the consensus seems to be that lasers are safe, painless and healing is much improved when compared to surgery with a scalpel. I would be more than happy to answer any questions about this exciting new area of dentistry.

TESTIMONIALS

Dear Dr. Doi:

When I read Dr. Huggins' book, "It's All In Your Head", I immediately called his clinic in Colorado for the recommendation of a local dentist who was educated in the dental procedures he discusses. While I was initially pleased to know that indeed, there was a dentist in Hawaii, I was less than thrilled to find out that this dentist was on the Big Island.

I had traveled practically around the world, but never to the Big Island; and I certainly had no intention of wasting my time and money to fly to Kona for, of all things, to see a dentist! Besides, the item, "go to the dentist" had never even made it within a light year's proximity of being on my "to do list," which explained the unfortunate condition of my teeth. So although I was suffering from a debilitating toothache so severe that I could barely think straight, I hung in there hoping that I would find a good dentist right here in Honolulu. After checking with friends for some names, the first two I visited highly recommended root canals (not an option for me); and after three months of researching and suffering, the third dentist I saw suggested that I have ALL my teeth pulled because he thought I might have a hereditary tendency toward tooth decay!

Having to choose between root canals or being totally toothless at age 47, I very reluctantly chose the option at the bottom of my list to call you for an appointment. Too chicken to go by myself, I talked my mother into coming with me and made an appointment for her, too.

Although I still cannot say that I look forward to my trips to Kona (as my mother does), I will admit that calling for my first appointment was one of the best decisions I've ever made. Due to my problems with chemical sensitivity, I had so many questions about the work you planned to do on my teeth, and I really appreciated your willingness to allow me to ask them. It took a lot of extra time and effort on your part, but having the procedures explained to me step-by-step greatly decreased my apprehension about dental procedures. Thankfully, due to your skill and knowledge, I survived all the drillings, fillings, cleanings, etc. without any adverse side effects.

To you and your staff, many thanks for making our visits to the dentist such a positive experience for all of us. May God bless you, as you have been a blessing to our family.

Aloha, Sharon Nagasako Honolulu, Hawaii