



Greetings: Dr. Ledesma

Dear ECHO-LDPP Family,

Everyone is managing multiple responsibilities: work, family, relationships, school, worries, and virtual environments (for ourselves, our children, our siblings). The transition to Fall Semester, air quality, record breaking heat and the pandemic create additional stress. It is easy to lose perspective and to set aside healthy practices, because we may feel overwhelmed by competing demands.

We have all “lost” the life that we had before March 2020. We are living with the outcomes from that. The instinct is to push back/push away the stressors or to move into problem solving mode. I invite you to acknowledge the stressor, examine/investigate it, hold it tenderly (it is a part of you), and consider how you can care for yourself (which will help in managing the stressor). Unexamined losses, traumas, and stressors can undermine and overwhelm resilience, and abilities to bounce back from adverse situations. We build resilience by examining and investigating loss or traumatic events, considering the meaning of the events and learning to soothe, comfort and care for ourselves. I offer this quote:

I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self-indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival.”

Audre Lorde

And, I hope you make space and time to care for yourself in the coming days.

With affection,

Dr. L



This edition of the Wellness Bulletin will focus on caring for our oral health. We are grateful for this special column submitted by Dr. Lauri Kim.

Maintaining Oral Health in the Midst of a New Norm, Lauri J. Kim, DDS, MSD

This year has brought on a new set of unique and unprecedented challenges for everyone. With the pandemic changing the way students learn and how individuals work, there is certainly an increased amount of time spent in front of computer screens

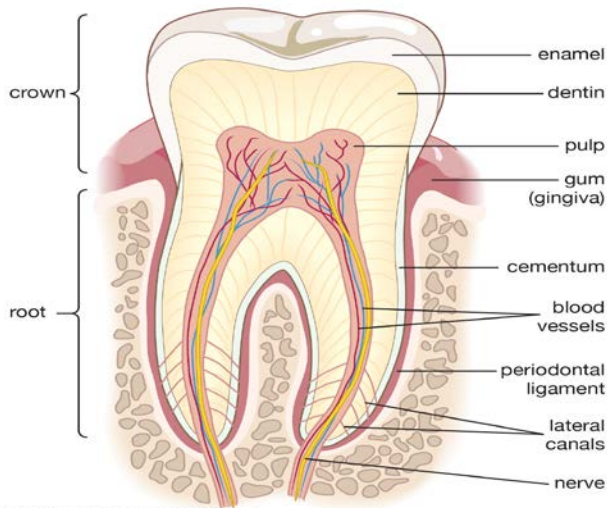


at home. And with these changes, there are inevitably new habits being born, some of which may not be conducive to maintaining good oral health. Though the oral cavity is part of the gateway to our bodies and one of the first lines of defense against infections, it is often overlooked in terms of all the many things happening in there around the clock – including this very moment while you are reading this!

Before getting into some of the habits that we can control to improve our oral health, let’s take a brief look at some terms and components of this incredibly powerful gateway to health.

A cavity (*dental caries*) is when the structure of the tooth has been compromised. With its *multifactorial* nature, in order for a cavity to form, four things are necessary: a specific diet, cavity-causing bacteria, a susceptible tooth surface, and time. Though your parents may have given you many wonderful things in life, they may also have passed on their cavity-causing bacteria (*Streptococcus mutans*) to you when they kissed you as an infant or checked the temperature of your pureed foods in their mouths before feeding it to you as a toddler. When the cavity initially starts penetrating the outer *enamel* layer (which is the hardest structure in your body and which cannot grow back after it has been

lost!) of your teeth, it is considered *incipient* and can still be reversible with proper care. However, once it



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starts to reach past enamel to the next layer of *dentin*, the cavity can spread more rapidly, because of its structure composed of *dentinal tubules*. Once this happens, the cavity is no longer reversible at this point. Once past the dentin, the cavity can spread rapidly into the *pulp* where blood vessels and nerves reside, and inflammation of such structures causes pain and discomfort (think root canals & gum disease). Oftentimes, particularly for busy students or working adults, this is when an individual decides it is time to see a dentist. Unfortunately by this point, however, the cavity must be repaired in order to prevent further spreading of infection and pain. A better solution is to *prevent* cavities from occurring in the first place. Prevention begins with good habits. Since dental caries are one of the most preventable diseases known, let's review some good habits you can adopt, relating them back to the four necessary components in the formation of cavities.

In general, diets high in sugars are linked to caries formation. But beware, as simple sugars are not only present in sweet desserts and candies! Simple sugars are found in carbohydrates like pastas and breads, and also in fruits. When food is broken down in your mouth after a meal, the bacteria in your mouth



will metabolize the simple sugars and form acid byproducts, which subsequently lower the pH inside your mouth. When these byproducts are mixed with plaque on the surfaces of your teeth in an acidic environment where the bacterial colonies thrive, a *biofilm* is formed (think slimy moss at lakes or ponds) and *demineralization* of the surfaces of your teeth begins. Cavities form when this process of *demineralization* consistently wins over the process of *remineralization*.



About 20-30 minutes after a meal, the pH in your mouth goes back to normal levels, and every time you brush and floss, the biofilm and plaque layers on your teeth are disturbed and removed. This is why the *frequency* of eating and drinking is just as important, if not more, than what you're eating. For example, sipping a latte with sugar and cream over a long period of four hours is significantly worse for your dental health than finishing it in one sitting. Likewise, snacking on a bowl of fruit all day can be worse than finishing it in one sitting. When choosing foods for your meals and snacks, it's important to remember the common saying: *moderation is key*. But perhaps we can edit that to say: *moderation and frequency are key*. It's completely fine to indulge occasionally, but think about the types of foods you're introducing into your bodies and think about the habits you're creating.

Since we can't avoid eating and drinking, it's important to know what we can do to avoid letting a good thing become a harmful thing. Brush your teeth at least twice a day (morning and night) with a soft bristled toothbrush (to prevent recession), and if you can, after every meal. Floss at least once a day (at night), and if you can, after every meal. A mouthwash containing fluoride can also be used to supplement, but be sure to follow the instructions on the label. In addition, wait about 20-30 minutes after finishing a meal to brush, since the lowered pH and the brushing can actually erode the sensitive enamel layer of your teeth. And to combat bad odors (coffee breath, anyone?), make sure you brush your tongue (pretty vigorously) since a lot of bacteria thrive on it and cause bad breath (not that we're seeing many



people these days, let alone exposing them to the lower halves of our faces!).

Finally, since it will be impossible to keep your teeth 100% clean with even the best habits at home, it's important to see your dentist at least every six months to make sure to get a professional cleaning,



take x-rays to monitor the formation of any new cavities, and to follow up with your home care routine.

Healthy Habits & Healthy Lifestyle = Oral Health
(Even in a pandemic!)

THE 2-2-2 RULE

BRUSH YOUR TEETH 2 TIMES A DAY.
Morning and night!

BRUSH YOUR TEETH FOR 2 MINUTES.
Set a timer or play a 2 minute song.

VISIT THE DENTIST 2 TIMES A YEAR.
That is every 6 months.

Don't forget to floss at night before brushing your teeth.

eCHO
Educational Community Health Outreach
LOCAL DENTAL PILOT PROJECT

07/2020

ECHO Wellness Activities on ZOOM:

Movement & Exercise: MW @8:00 am
Midday Meditation: T/TH @12:00 pm

Zoom Link:

<https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/325327459>
Meeting ID: 325 327 459



Meme:

