



LAURENCE H. STONE, D.D.S.

COSMETIC & GENERAL DENTISTRY

For the smiles of your life.

Why is Oral Health Important for Men?

June 2012 –In over 30 years of private practice Dr. Larry Stone has observed that men are less likely than women to take care of their physical health and equally ignore their oral health, a phenomena confirmed by recent surveys and studies reported on by the Academy of General Dentistry. Being male is one of the most common factors associated with infrequent dental checkups, even though longevity has recently has been linked with good oral health. Men often neglect their oral health for years, are less likely than women to seek preventive dental care and only visit a dentist when they have a problem. Statistics show that the average man brushes his teeth 1.9 times a day and will lose 5.4 teeth by age 72; smokers will lose 12 teeth by age 72. Men are also more prone to developing periodontal (gum) disease as well as oral and throat cancer.

Common oral health concerns for men include:

Periodontal Disease

The bacteria in plaque releases acids and other toxins that cause the breakdown of fibers anchoring the gums tightly to the teeth, creating periodontal pockets that fill with more bacteria leading to periodontal disease. Researchers have found that there may be a correlation between gum disease and cardiovascular disease, which can place people at risk for heart attacks and strokes. See your dentist if you have any of these symptoms:

- Bleeding gums during brushing
- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Persistent bad breath
- Loose or separating teeth

Medications

Because men are more likely to suffer from a heart attack, they also are more likely to be on medications that can cause dry mouth. If you take heart or blood pressure medication, or antidepressants, your salivary flow could be affected which increases the risk for cavities. Saliva helps to reduce the cavity-causing bacteria found in the mouth.

Tobacco

The risk of gum disease and oral cancer increase if you smoke or chew. Ninety-five percent of oral cancers occur in those 40+ years of age, with men being affected twice as often as women.

The most common oral cancers include the tongue, the floor of the mouth, soft palate tissues in back of the tongue, lips and gums. If not diagnosed early and treated in the beginning stages, oral cancer can spread. Once this occurs, chronic pain, loss of function, irreparable facial and oral disfigurement following surgery and even death can happen. Over 8,000 people die each year from oral and pharyngeal

diseases. As a tobacco user, it is vital to see a dentist frequently for cleanings and to ensure your mouth remains healthy. A thorough screening for oral cancer can also be performed by your general dentist.

Sports

Those who play sports have a greater risk for trauma to the mouth and teeth. During contact sports - such as football, soccer, basketball, and baseball - it is important to use a mouth guard. This flexible plastic appliance protects teeth from trauma. And always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or motorcycle.

Take Care of Your Teeth

To maintain good oral health, floss daily, brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice daily and visit your dentist at least twice a year for cleanings. Here are some tips to better dental health:

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush to reach every surface of each tooth. Purchase a new brush once the bristles are bent or frayed.
- Replace your toothbrush every three months or after you've been sick.
- Choose toothpaste with fluoride, which can reduce tooth decay up to 40%.
- Brush correctly. Position the brush at a 45-degree angle where your gums and teeth meet to clean the outside surfaces of your teeth. Move the brush in a gentle, circular motion using short, gentle strokes. Hold the brush vertically to clean the inside surfaces of the upper and lower front teeth. Make several gentle strokes over each tooth and its surrounding gum tissue. Spend at least three minutes brushing.
- Floss correctly. Gently insert floss between teeth using a back-and-forth motion. Do not force or snap the floss into place. Once positioned between the teeth, floss by using an up and down motion.