As a fresh new year looms ahead, let’s take a moment now to confirm some healthy, personal resolutions.

A good work/play balance should be on our 2013 agenda, with a promise that we’ll take better care of ourselves from both a mental and a physical state. As your dental office, we’d like to remind you that both of these have a direct bearing on your dental health, from excess stress that can cause you to grind or clench your teeth, to the unhealthy foods you put in your mouth.

Remember, an excellent preventive measure to avoiding serious dental problems is to maintain a regular schedule of continuing care visits which will detect any problems early, before they become big, expensive issues. In fact, if you haven’t already booked your next checkup, why not take a minute to do so now?

All the best to you and your family for a happy and healthy 2013!

Michael C. Sloan

Dr. Michael C. Sloan

A SENSITIVE SUBJECT

Do you have sensitive teeth? If you’re a redhead, you’ll be interested to know that there is actually documented evidence that you really do suffer more from pain than the rest of the population! While everyone has different thresholds of pain, a study published in The Journal of the American Dental Association reveals that people with red hair are increasingly prone to pain sensitivity than people with brown, black or blond hair.

Even if you’re not a redhead, there are a multitude of reasons that can trigger discomfort from your sensitive teeth. For example, teeth can be sensitive because of decay or fracture. Sometimes tooth pain is caused by hot or cold temperatures, or even by sweet stimuli seeping into microscopic cracks in the teeth, caused by teeth constantly expanding and contracting from temperature extremes. In other cases, the gums that protect the roots of our teeth recede, exposing the roots. Any hot or cold contact with these exposed areas stimulates the nerves of the teeth, causing sensitivity.

While good dental habits are to be commended, sometimes an overly exuberant style can backfire, resulting in overly sensitive teeth. For example, brushing teeth too hard can wear away the protective tooth enamel or even expose tooth roots and cause gum recession. The desire for minty-fresh breath means that some people use mouthwash frequently, exposing their teeth to the acids in some brands that can make already-sensitive teeth even more so. Certain toothpastes and teeth whiteners can have the same effect.

Please come in and talk to us about your sensitive teeth. Remember, our job is to identify the reason for your dental discomfort and solve it. Today’s “comfort-first” technology allows us to achieve that in a way that will put a smile back on your face in no time!
AFTER THE TOOTH FAIRY LEAVES...

The timing and process of teething varies from child to child, with some babies surprising everyone with a tooth at three months, and others worrying their parents with gummy grins until they’re a full year old.

By the time your “permanent” teeth are in, your lifelong dental care process should be established. But what happens if you lose one of your permanent teeth or have to have it removed?

Once teeth start growing in, they progress at a rapid rate until the child has a full set of 20 “baby” teeth by about age three. At around age six, these primary teeth start falling out as the permanent teeth begin to push through the gums. The child will continue to lose primary teeth until about age 12, adding permanent teeth until about age 21, when all 32 of the permanent teeth should have erupted.

In an ideal world, you would keep all of your teeth from that point forward, but in reality there are some situations where you may need to have one or more of your pearly whites professionally removed. The reasons for tooth extraction may range from having to pull a stubborn baby tooth to make room for a permanent one, to needing to remove a decayed tooth that threatens to affect the surrounding teeth and jaw, to teeth extraction for orthodontic reasons, to wisdom teeth removal. Whatever the reason for having to pull a tooth, it’s vital to follow some basic post-extraction instructions:

1. After the tooth is pulled, place a folded piece of sterile gauze on the extraction site, and bite or press down on it to keep it in place for at least 60 minutes following surgery. Gently replace the gauze as necessary.

2. It’s crucial to remember not to smoke following surgery, and not rinse your mouth or spit forcefully on the first day, as this could dislodge the site’s blood clot and delay healing. Also – very important – do not suck on a straw as it could disrupt the healing process, possibly leading to an uncomfortable condition called “dry socket.”

3. Place ice packs – a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel works well also – on your jaw with a “15 minutes on, 15 minutes off” schedule for the first 24 hours. This helps reduce facial swelling and may provide some comfort.

4. On the second day, you may gently rinse your mouth with a solution of half a teaspoon of salt to one quart of water, several times a day.

Any gap left by a missing tooth (baby teeth, wisdom teeth and teeth removed for orthodontic reasons excepted) will need to be filled to ensure optimum health, and the positioning and visual appeal of the remaining teeth. Tooth replacement options can include one or more of the following:

- Removable partial dentures.
- Fixed dental bridges.
- Full dentures, for patients who have lost all of their teeth on the top and/or bottom of their mouth.
- Dental implants, surgically implanted replacement tooth roots capped with natural-looking replacement teeth.

We’re here to make sure your smile is as healthy, attractive and as complete as possible, and welcome all your questions on all tooth removal and replacement issues.
BUILDING A BOND WITH YOUR DENTIST

Even though teeth are remarkably strong, accidents do happen, often (as Murphy’s Law would have it) to the noticeable teeth at the front of your mouth. If you found yourself with a chipped tooth, what would be your best option for repair?

In many cases, your best bet for an easy, economical and effective cosmetic restoration is with dental bonding.

Bonding materials are composed of high-density composite resin content that can be matched to your natural tooth color for a perfect-looking repair. Bonding can also be used to even out the shape of your teeth or change the color of stained teeth when whitening doesn’t prove effective. Have a space between your teeth that’s been bothering you? Bonding can fill in gaps too.

Think of bonding materials like sculptor’s clay, to not only fix chipped teeth, but to also close minor gaps, correct the appearance of slightly crooked teeth, change the color of your teeth and cover any small, natural flaws in your smile.

Dental bonding can be the perfect answer to a host of dental imperfections. Please ask us how this smile solution may work for you – not only to fix a chipped tooth, but to create a beautiful smile that’s more esthetically pleasing overall.

WHAT’S LURKING IN LIQUIDS?

No living being can survive without water. Beyond water, however, humans consume a multitude of different liquids throughout the day, many of which can have adverse effects on teeth.

As a baby, you may have been put to sleep with a bottle of milk. As an adult, please don’t pass this habit on, as we now know more about the sugars that appear naturally in many foods – even milk! Putting a baby to bed with a bottle allows the milk to pool in the child’s mouth as they sleep, bathing the teeth with milk – and the accompanying sugar – which mixes with the bacteria in the mouth to attack tooth enamel.

Many fruit juices are also high in sugar, so look for juice with no added sugar and consider diluting juices with water. The same goes for sports and energy drinks, which have high levels of sugar and acid.

Do you drink “diet” soda because you’ve heard that regular soda can include up to 11 teaspoons of sugar?

Recognize that “sugar-free” doesn’t mean “home-free” – diet sodas still contain acid that can severely harm your teeth!

The sugar content in alcohol (including beer) can create an acidic breeding ground for bacteria and plaque. Even a relaxing glass of wine – no matter if it’s red or white – isn’t immune: the acids in wine can eat away at tooth enamel, creating rough spots that make teeth more porous and therefore vulnerable to staining.

Please ask us for suggestions on how to keep your teeth healthy and attractive while continuing to enjoy your favorite drinks!
While our goal here at your dental practice is to help you achieve and maintain great oral health, we’d like to make sure you know how necessary dental procedures can also improve your smile in a cosmetic sense.

Dental crowns are one example of a dental procedure that might be recommended for an essential repair but can end up beautifying your smile in the process.

A dental crown (or “cap”) provides a whole new outer surface of a tooth, covering the tooth like a thimble would cover your finger. You may need one if your tooth:

• Is severely broken or worn down.
• Has had large portions destroyed by tooth decay.
• Is weak, due to excessively large fillings.
• Has had a root canal treatment, and therefore needs to be reinforced with a strong outer surface.

• Has been replaced with a dental implant.

While metal crowns are often found at the back of the mouth, an increasing number of patients are asking for “white” alternatives, available through ceramic or porcelain crowns. They are not only a good option for people with metal sensitivities or allergies, but also provide a beautiful cosmetic outcome. All-ceramic or all-porcelain dental crowns are a more obvious choice for front teeth, as the shade of white used would be custom-created to match your surrounding teeth and therefore blend in seamlessly with your smile.

Please ask us how dental crowns can improve not only the strength of your teeth, but also the splendor of your smile!

**GET WELL SOON!**

The arrival of winter is often accompanied by the cold and flu season. While cough drops and cough syrup may provide some comfort and help ease some of your symptoms, be aware they could create a secondary problem… dental decay!

Many cough drops, liquid medications, antacid tablets and even vitamins contain sugar. The sugar in the lozenges and liquids can react with the sticky plaque found on your teeth, creating an acid that starts to eat into your tooth enamel – potentially leading to dental caries (usually referred to as cavities).

Talk to your doctor and pharmacist about sugar-free alternatives to any prescription or off-the-shelf medications you may be taking. Here are some simple habits to mitigate the potential effects of the “teaspoon of sugar” that helps your medicine go down:

• Rinse your mouth thoroughly after consuming any lozenge or liquid medication.
• Take liquid medication with food (if permitted).
• Talk to your dentist about protecting your teeth with sealants and fluoride treatments.

For more suggestions, please contact us today!