

**VOLUME 18 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2022**

**GUEST ARTICLE: UNITED CONCORDIA DENTAL**

## UNITED CONCORDIA<sup>®</sup> DENTAL

### **Welcome Spring!**

Spring is a time of awakening and implementing some good habits like healthy eating is a great way to start a fresh new routine. And good nutrition isn't just good for your body. Eating healthy is equally important to your oral health.

It's also a great time to get back to your regular dentist appointments if you've been putting them off during the pandemic. If you're nervous, see below for some great technology tips that can help you relax in the chair.

### **Good Nutrition Supports Good Teeth**

A nutritious diet is an essential part of good oral health and whole-body health and includes nutrient-dense foods from the major food groups: lean proteins, whole grains, healthful fats and lots of fruits and vegetables. Things like minimizing sugary foods, sodium and trans-fats will help keep your body—and mouth—in great shape.

Among the top benefits of a healthy diet are heart health, reduced risk of cancer and strong bones and teeth. One of the most important nutritional supplements to your teeth is calcium. It's the most abundant mineral found in the human body, making it an essential building block of our anatomy. Of this supply, 99% supports the bones and teeth.

Adults need about 1,000 mg of calcium, or three to four glasses of milk daily. Adults with average dietary needs typically require 1,000 mg of calcium each day, but postmenopausal women may need an additional 200 mg. Not everyone likes milk, and some cannot tolerate it or drink enough of it to meet daily calcium needs. But plenty of alternative foods can supplement daily calcium intake, including yogurt, cheese, and dark-green, leafy vegetables. You can also try drinking calcium-fortified juices or soy milk.

This guide shows healthy options you can enjoy guilt free and those that you might consider consuming in moderation or avoid.

### [Good \(and not so Good\) Diet Choices for a Healthy Mouth](#)

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### Technology to Distract You at the Dentist

Many of us have avoided the dentist's office during the pandemic, but if you haven't made it back there yet—now is the time! It's not uncommon to experience general anxiety about dental visits, but an estimated 25% of Americans are considered "dental phobic," meaning they have an extreme fear of going to the dentist. If this is you, it's important to at least minimize anxiety to the point where you can still seek dental treatment when you need it. If deep breathing just isn't enough, think about trying a few of these technology-based relaxation techniques at your next dental visit.

**Smartphone apps:** We've all heard of the relaxation apps available on a smartphone, but have you ever thought about using one at the dentist? A variety of options are available, such as mindfulness- or meditation-style apps, or one that plays nature sounds, and many of them are free. Most are very user friendly, so we suggest trying out a few to see what works best for you. Be careful to pay attention to "free trial periods," in-app purchases and privacy issues.

**Virtual reality systems:** These are not yet common in dental offices, but if available they can provide a drug-free solution for dental phobia. A virtual reality (VR) system can distract your brain from worry and pain surrounding dental treatment by immersing you in an interactive, virtual world, complete with sights, sounds and motion. Studies have shown that using VR can reduce patient reports of pain during medical procedures, including periodontal treatment.<sup>1</sup> In one study, pain relief during procedures where patients used VR was twice that delivered by morphine.<sup>2</sup>

**Listen to music or read:** Sitting in the waiting room can heighten anxiety and distracting yourself by reading or listening to music through headphones can help you to relax. Due to COVID19 restrictions, many dental and doctor offices do not provide magazines in the waiting room, so bring your own materials.

If you still can't relax, discuss other options with your dentist that can help calm your nerves. Your dentist could possibly prescribe a sedative for you to take prior to your procedure. Or you could consider sedation dentistry as an alternative option. And don't forget—the best way to beat your fear of the dentist is to avoid tooth decay! If you have healthy teeth, you don't have to fear a dental procedure, right? Practice good oral health habits by brushing at least twice every day and flossing daily.

### Sources

Varshneya R., Oral Health, 3 ways technology can help alleviate anxiety in dental patients. August 31, 2020.

Schermerhorn L. Can virtual reality change your dental practice? It's worked for others, Dentistry IQ, posted January 10, 2020.

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### **New Technology at the Dentist's Office**

From smart phones and robot vacuums to virtual assistants that answer your voice commands, tech gadgets have transformed how we live, work and play. Modern technology is showing up in the dentist's office, too. Several new advancements are helping to make visits quicker and less painful, so don't be surprised if you encounter one or more of the following advances at your next appointment.

#### **3D-printed crowns**

In the past, the dentist had to cast a mold of your tooth and then ship it off to a lab to have the crown made. You'd be fit with a temporary crown while you waited – sometimes as long as two weeks. Now, using desktop 3D printers, dentists can make permanent crowns right in the office in just minutes. This technology also can be used to make implants, veneers, aligners, and retainers.

#### **Infrared imaging to detect cavities**

To find cavities, dentists typically rely on x-rays and a tool that checks for soft spots on tooth enamel. But x-rays don't always show very early surface cavities. With infrared imaging, the dentist glides a wand over the teeth, bathing them in safe, near-infrared light. While the images captured look like x-rays, they illuminate small or minor areas of decay, so you can get treated earlier.

#### **Laser dentistry**

Dental lasers can be used to remove cavities, whiten teeth, and treat gum disease. Lasers work by aiming a narrow beam of light at decay, enamel, or tissue. The light reacts with the area being treated, allowing it to be removed or reshaped. When used for surgery, the laser "vaporizes" tissue by heating it up versus cutting with a scalpel. So, it's less invasive and pain is almost non-existent.

#### **3D X-rays**

Preparing for some procedures such as a dental implant, root canal or braces require more detailed images than traditional x-rays can capture. In those cases, the dentist may use cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) to get a precise look at your soft tissues, nerves, and bones. With CBCT, a scanner rotates around your entire head, taking between 150 to 700 panoramic images, which are digitally combined to form a 3D image.

#### **Check your dental coverage first**

All dental offices are different, so yours may or may not have these capabilities. Remember to check your dental insurance to see if these services and procedures are covered by your plan.

Just log in to your MyDentalBenefits account, and look under the Covered Services tab.