

## BREAK YOUR CYCLE!

**Dear Dr McCrummen: From the time I was young I have had horrible dental experiences, and have had many teeth pulled. I *hate* to go to the dentist, so I don't, unless it's an emergency. I recently had a bad toothache and it was difficult finding a dentist that would help me. They had a hard time getting me numb, pulled my tooth, and then I ended up with a dry socket for another week of pain. It cost me a way too much. I suffered for two months. I am not going back for a long time and I won't take my young kids either! I don't want to put my kids through it. Why does it have to be so painful and expensive in this day and age? T.A.**

About 95% of the human population will have dental problems in their lifetime. Dental disease is actually the most common disease in the world. *In this day and age*, prevention through education and self-motivation will reduce disease, suffering, and costs for you and your family.

One thing about this common disease is that it can easily be prevented. Going to your dental office regularly, learning how to prevent dental problems, doing your homework every day (it only takes 6 minutes), and using fluoride, are the simple solutions. Once disease begins a dentist will need to stop it or help you to control it.

As a parent responsible for the well-being of your children you should insist on good dental home care each day. Try to set a good example. Provide healthy snacks and eliminate things like sodas, sugary foods, and gum. Start dental visits around the age of two. Simple dental examinations and cleanings will help kids to get used to the procedures. They will learn that dental visits are non-threatening and a part of life. They may never have to experience a scary visit like you have if they are taught how to prevent problems. Remember that you will also be saving yourself money if you train your kids to take good care of their health.

It is easy for people to get into a cycle of avoidance due to fear, pain, or expense. If you fear the dentist and avoid them, you will allow problems to progress until you *do* have more pain and expenses. Continuing to avoid preventive visits will reinforce your fears and frustrations at each emergency visit. *Break your cycle* and no longer put yourself or your children through needless suffering.

When a person becomes sick from infection, and lack of food and sleep, it can be difficult to provide painless health care. Abscessed teeth tend to be difficult to numb. Long-term infection can lead to bone, nerve, or sinus damage, slow healing, and complications such as the "dry socket" you experienced, which can be worse than a toothache. Loss of teeth can lead to future complications, discomforts, and costs. Protect your teeth.

Dental offices are not like emergency rooms where people can easily be seen without an appointment. Dentists preschedule their patients for planned treatment and it can be difficult to find an office that will be able to see you. If you do find an office it can be very stressful for the staff to change schedules, and it inconveniences other patients that may have to be rescheduled weeks later. Emergency treatment can be complex and time consuming causing the doctor to run behind, upsetting other patients that are waiting. If it is an after-hours emergency and all of the staff have to stay late, or need to come in on an evening or weekend, or if you need to be seen at the emergency room, you can expect even higher expenses.

Emergencies are never convenient for anyone, are especially frustrating when they could have been avoided by earlier treatment, and it is really sad to see this happen to kids. Is a person that is tired of having a toothache for two months, and could have easily been treated by scheduling an appointment earlier, truly having an emergency? *"Emergency: An accident or unforeseen problem that calls for immediate action."* Be kinder to yourself, and more thoughtful to all of those people affected by your avoidance by breaking your cycle. Everyone will be less frustrated; you will spend less money, suffer less, and perhaps even start enjoying your dental visits. Wouldn't that be nice?

