

THE TOOTH ABOUT CATS AND DOGS

Cats and dogs need regular dental check-ups just like their owners. Without proper care, signs of oral disease will be seen in 80% of dogs and 70% of cats by age three. Oral disease is the #1 health problem for cats and dogs, according to the American Veterinary Dental Society. (www.petdental.com)

BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Volatile Sulfur Compounds (VSC) are responsible for about 90% of halitosis. Brushing the tongue (especially the back area), flossing (below the gumline between teeth), increasing saliva flow (drinking water, sucking on sugarless candy, or chewing sugarless gum), and using a toothpaste and mouthrinse containing "chlorine dioxide" (available at many dental offices) will help. Using Listerine and oral products that contains baking soda and hydrogen peroxide will also help. If you work closely with people, all of the above recommendations can help make those people happier. (www.floss.com)

14TH CENTURY TOOTH WHITENING

Not quite the 'Good 'ol Days." Back then, "Barber-Surgeons" typically just removed teeth that had any problems. A tooth whitening trend started in the 1300's. To do this, they filed teeth with a coarse metal instrument, and dabbed them with a highly corrosive nitric acid solution, called "aquafortis". This whitened teeth but also caused severe cavities. Even so, this process was popular up to the 18th century. (Panati's)

BIOFILM - NOT A BIOGRAPHY MOVIE

Biofilm is more a good source of Sci-Fi movie material. It coats such things as ship hulls, rocks in streams, sewer pipes, our blood vessels, and our teeth (plaque). Biofilm harbors bacteria in a highly protective environment that is almost totally resistant to attempts to destroy it. It seems to be an ancient way to maintain bacterial life under extreme conditions. Biofilm is made of many colonies of bacteria separated by watery channels, and surrounded by a protective "goo", which absorbs water and traps nutrients. Bacterial colonies can be harmless or toxic, and some are helpful to others. Gum disease is caused by at least six bacterial species that work together in our oral biofilm. This is a "hands-on moment". If you are not easily "grossed out" run your index fingernail along the gumline of several teeth, or scrape the back, top of your tongue. The white gelatinous material you will see on your fingernail is biofilm (plaque). If you rub it together, between your index finger and thumb, and smell it you will get a good indication of your breath.

Biofilm resists antibiotics and germicides. Things like "Listerine", and "triclosan" in toothpaste (like Total) must be left in contact (not rinsed away or diluted) to give them time to penetrate and work. Physically removing biofilm from surfaces (flossing daily) is the best defense against oral disease, brushing them away with a soap (toothpaste), and then exposing the remaining disrupted and vulnerable organisms to things such as Listerine (containing natural antibacterial ingredients from eucalyptus and thyme) is very helpful. Dental cleanings and fluoride help provide a smooth, hard surface that biofilm has a hard time reattaching to.

OVERWEIGHT = MORE DECAY

According to the Academy of General Dentistry, 1 in 7 American children are overweight. I believe more recent studies find the figure to be much higher. Being overweight puts adolescents at increased risk of high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol (heart disease), diabetes, osteoporosis (weak bones), and tooth decay. Perhaps the decay finding showed up due to increased consumption of sugars, which can lead to weight gain. FACT: Dairy purchases by teens in high school have decreased by 30% over the past 20 years. The osteoporosis finding could come from inactivity due to excessive weight (physical activity promotes strong bones) and lifestyle (sitting in front of a computer, TV, or video game), as well as decreased consumption of milk, which is a good source of calcium. Sodas, which contain no nutrient value, excessive sugar, and bone leaching phosphoric acid for added flavor, add to weight, osteoporosis and decay. More students drink sodas these days which is very unhealthy in many ways.