

# Dental Health News®

Compliments of Dr. Lubomir Serafimov

## News From the Office of:



**Dr. Lubomir Serafimov**

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2009! We hope that you enjoy this dental update.

Did you make New Year's resolutions this year? Some of us make practical resolutions while others set goals that are a little out-of-range – but one resolution we should all strive for in 2009 is improved general and oral health.

If you have dental insurance, you should make a point of reviewing what your plan covers. Dental checkups, for example, should be scheduled on a regular basis as a preventive measure. After all, if your plan covers them, why not use your dental benefits?

Those of you who do not have dental insurance, you may want to take advantage of our in-office dental care plan to keep up with your preventive check-ups and cleanings. Visit us at [www.dr.usmiles.com](http://www.dr.usmiles.com) for more details!

We wish you all the best for the new year, and look forward to seeing you soon.

All the best,

*Lubomir Serafimov*

Dr. Lubomir Serafimov and Team

## COSMETIC DENTISTRY: NECESSARY OR NARCISSISTIC?



People sometimes shy away from the term "cosmetic dentistry" because they worry it may sound vain. The truth is, while some cosmetic dentistry simply covers aesthetic enhancements, much of it covers practical dental necessities too.

For example, over time, our teeth can wear down and develop chips and cracks. This results not only in an aesthetically uneven smile, but also difficulty in chewing. Not being able to consume a proper diet will, of course, lead to a multitude of other health issues.

Chipped or otherwise damaged teeth can easily be covered with porcelain veneers, mended with dental bonding or covered with crowns or onlays. Your smile will look great with these "cosmetic" improvements, and your overall health could improve too as your stronger teeth allow you to consume many of the fresh foods that may have been difficult to eat with your damaged ones.

Crooked teeth are often a cosmetic concern, but from a health perspective they can also be a liability, as they are harder to floss and clean properly, which could lead to gum disease and other diseases and health issues throughout your body. Straighten out your smile to help straighten out your health.

The bright, perfect smiles of magazine models reflect the most popular form of cosmetic dentistry: teeth whitening. But even those of us who aren't supermodels can appreciate the younger, more confident look that a whiter smile brings, and the psychological boost that comes with looking better.

Of course, all the whitening in the world won't help your smile if you're missing teeth. The gap left by a missing tooth can affect the positions of other teeth, allowing them to drift out of position, changing your bite and potentially leading to gum disease and pain in the jaw. If you'd like to minimize the risk of dental problems due to the gap, as well as be able to smile and eat again with confidence and yes – look better too! – please ask us for more information on dental implants.

Let's talk about cosmetic dentistry to help you look and feel great!



# THE ABCs (AND Ds!) OF GUM DISEASE

Gum disease, or periodontitis, is the most common disease in North America. There are many contributing factors to it, including the following:

## **Arthritis:**

According to a recent study published in the Journal of Periodontology, researchers have discovered that people with rheumatoid arthritis have a higher incidence of periodontal disease than those without. This underlines the importance of sharing information about your general health with your dentist, as sometimes a disease that one wouldn't think connects to a dental issue can play a role in diagnosing gum disease.

## **Brushing:**

Brushing your teeth after every meal ensures that you remove any residual food from your teeth, as it can provide a feeding ground for the naturally present bacteria in your mouth. If food isn't brushed and rinsed from your mouth after you eat, bacteria feed on the sugars left in and around your teeth, leading to plaque formation. If plaque is not removed, it can lead to gingivitis and the development of gum disease.

Along with brushing, daily flossing is essential, to remove the plaque and debris that collect between the teeth and under the gumline, where your toothbrush can't reach.

Regular, thorough flossing and brushing is a simple and effective way to remove the bacteria that causes tooth decay and gum disease.

## **Calcium and Vitamin C:**

Gingivitis, the first stage in gum disease, causes gums to bleed easily and become red and swollen. One of the steps in fighting gingivitis can be as easy as including a glass of milk, with its calcium content, or orange juice, with its vitamin C content, into your daily routine.

Researchers have determined that men and women who have calcium intakes of less than 500 milligrams, or about half the recommended amount, are almost twice as likely to have periodontal disease, as measured by detachment of the gums from the teeth. Another report suggests that patients who consume less than the recommended 60 milligrams of vitamin C a day (about one orange) are nearly one-and-a-half times more likely to develop severe gingivitis than those who consume three times the recommended daily amount.

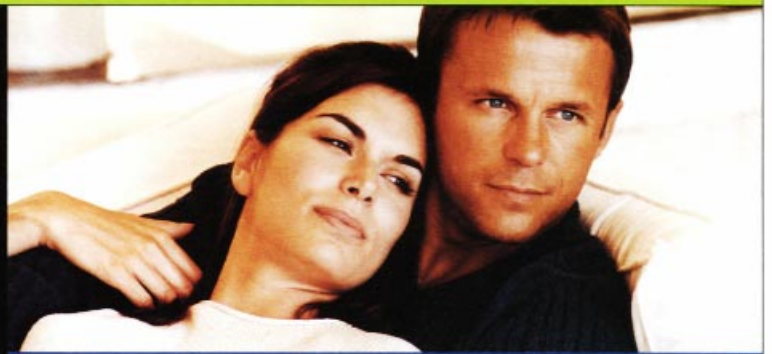
If you're a smoker, pay special attention to your vitamin C intake, as oxidants from cigarette smoking lower vitamin C levels in the blood. In addition, cigarette smoke contains numerous oxidants that can cause periodontal tissue damage, regardless of vitamin C intake.

## **Vitamin D:**

Vitamin D, also known as the "sunshine vitamin," is just as essential as calcium for healthy teeth and bones. In fact, vitamin D aids in the absorption of calcium. The best way to obtain the required amount of vitamin D is from sunshine, ideally ten to 15 minutes of sun exposure to the face, arms, hands or back, at least twice a week. Depending on where you live, finding enough sun may be difficult at this time of year, so you may want to consider getting your vitamin D from foods such as milk, eggs, sardines and tuna, which are fortified with vitamin D, or taking a vitamin supplement.



If you have any questions on gum disease or any other dental issue, please ask us. We would be pleased to give you more information and tips on how to achieve the best dental health possible.



## BRING BRUXISM TO A GRINDING HALT

According to the American Academy of General Dentistry, as many as one in three people suffer from bruxism – the condition used to describe unconscious grinding and clenching, usually when asleep. Many people don't even know that they grind their teeth, although they are painfully aware of otherwise unexplained headaches, chronic facial pain, increased sensitivity in their teeth or constantly waking up with a sore jaw. In some cases patients even experience earaches because of severe muscle contractions.

People who share their sleeping space may find out from their sleep partner that they grind their teeth, however most patients only find out during a dental visit, when the dental team notices loose teeth or unusual wear and tear – teeth that are worn down, flattened or chipped. Bruxing can also lead to the breakdown of dental restorations, loss of crowns and tooth fractures.

Why do some people grind their teeth so intensely while they sleep? The most common factor in today's "go, go, go" lifestyle is stress, including anxiety, anger and frustration. Bruxism has also been reported as a side effect of certain antidepressants, and some drugs like ecstasy and cocaine, while stimulants such as alcohol and caffeine are considered aggravating factors too. Patients with an abnormal alignment of upper and lower teeth may also be prone to grinding and clenching their teeth.

Depending on how much damage has already been done, we may recommend overlays or crowns to correct any tooth surfaces that have been worn away. At the very least, we will discuss custom-made mouthguards and protective dental appliances with you. While over-the-counter mouthguards exist, be aware that they generally don't fit well, and can even dislodge during bruxing.

Having regular dental exams, allowing a dentist to spot early signs of grinding in your mouth and jaw, is the best way to screen against bruxism, especially if you don't have a sleep partner who can report your nocturnal gnashing to you.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING AN ABSCESS

There are times when a toothache isn't just a toothache: it can sometimes be a serious infection with life-threatening implications. It's important to know the difference between a standard toothache and a more serious tooth abscess.

A tooth abscess is caused by a bacterial infection in the root of the tooth or in the surrounding gum tissue. The first indication of a problem would probably be the feeling of pressure, and an intense, persistent throbbing, due to pus under the surface. The tooth may be sensitive to heat, and the pressure of chewing or biting. As the infection becomes more severe, you may develop a fever, a swelling in your face or cheek, and tender, swollen lymph nodes under your jaw or in your neck. In some cases the abscess will rupture on its own, releasing a rush of foul fluid in your mouth. Even if the abscess does drain on its own, alleviating the pressure and the corresponding pain, you still need to come in for an assessment, and possibly antibiotics or further treatment.

Dental abscesses are serious infections that won't simply go away without treatment. It may be possible to drain the pus through the tooth itself so the tooth can be saved (with a root canal treatment), or if not, the tooth will need to be extracted to prevent a recurrence.

An abscessed tooth is the most dangerous of toothaches as, if not treated, the infection can spread into your bloodstream, leading to severe complications. It's always wise, with any toothache, to call us for advice. There are many reasons you may be feeling pain, and the best way to identify yours is with professional consultation.



# BRING YOUR SNAZZY BACK WITH PORCELAIN VENEERS!

One of the more commonly discussed procedures in cosmetic dentistry is the application of dental veneers. Most people recognize that the seemingly "perfect" smiles of many celebrities have been enhanced by veneers, but they may not recognize how veneers may improve a whole host of common tooth imperfections on just about anyone.

Veneers are strong, thin, acrylic or porcelain shells applied on top of healthy, although visually imperfect, teeth. Have a look at your smile in the mirror. If you notice any of the features listed here, please call us to find out how dental veneers may solve them, easily, quickly and comfortably.

Note that porcelain veneers are extremely stain resistant, a bonus allowing you to enjoy tobacco or your favorite staining foods and drinks, without the risk of ruining the color of your teeth.

## You may benefit from veneers if you have:

- Badly stained teeth that don't respond to whitening
- Chipped teeth, due to an accident or previous decay
- Slightly uneven teeth
- Front teeth with a small gap between them
- Slightly crowded or overlapping teeth



## SMILES ARE CONTAGIOUS!

There's an interesting theory that people can make themselves and others feel happier by consciously forcing a smile. While it may not be a scientifically proven idea, the "science of smiling" does provide food for thought. After all, who can deny that a friendly smile cast in their direction lightens their mood, and makes them want to smile too?

Of course, you have to be confident in the condition of your teeth and gums to feel secure about your smile, and that's where you can make some dental resolutions for this year.

### My 2009 Dental Resolutions:

1. I will floss every day, and brush my teeth at least twice a day for at least two minutes each time, no matter how tired or how rushed I am.
2. I will pay more attention to food, drinks and tobacco that may stain my teeth. If my teeth are already stained, I will ask my dentist about teeth whitening options.
3. I will finally get around to having my dentist fix any gaps, chips or slightly uneven teeth that have been bothering me.
4. I will consider a bridge or a dental implant to replace my missing tooth or teeth, so that I won't have to worry about the gap ever again.
5. I will take pride in my dental health, and share my smile with as many people as possible!



**Dr. Serafimov and Team**

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### Office Team:

Sandy *Office Manager*  
Andi *Hygienist*  
Colette, Alethia *Dental Assistants*

### Office Hours:

Mon., Thurs.: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Tues.: 12 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
Wed., Fri.: 7:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

### Our Services Include:

- General & Cosmetic Dentistry
- Tooth Whitening • Digital X-Ray
- Bonding, Veneers, Crowns, Bridges
- Emergency Dental Care
- Denture Fittings
- Bad Breath Advice and Treatment
- Evening Hours Available