



Dental Health News™

Compliments of Joseph A. DeLapa, D.D.S.

News From the Office of:



Dr. Joseph A. DeLapa

Many people finally have time to play catch-up over the summer months, whether it's catching up with friends and family, catching up to some overdue vacation time or just catching up with a "to do" list that's been lengthening over the year. Is a visit to our office on your list?

When you look at our article "Open Wide For The Inside Story," you'll realize just how important it is to stay on top of your dental health, for the sake of your overall general health. If you have any questions on this topic or on any other dental issues, we would be happy to talk them over with you!

Enjoy your summer plans, and we'll look forward to catching up with you soon.

All the best,

Joseph A. DeLapa, D.D.S.

Dr. Joseph A. DeLapa

WHO HAS THE MOST WINNING HOLLYWOOD SMILE?



May I have the envelope please...

This year's female winner for Best Celebrity Smile, as voted by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, is Eva Mendes. Not bad for a girl who, growing up, was teased about her "buck teeth"!

In second place is The Devil Wears Prada's star Anne Hathaway, followed by actress Kate Hudson with her infectious grin.

In the men's category, Hollywood's Brad Pitt secured top position with the number one male celebrity smile. Soccer's David Beckham scored second place, while actor Will Smith's pearly whites paved his way to third.

While many of us sigh over the rich and famous' seemingly perfect lives, there's no reason why the rest of us can't have their perfect smiles! In fact, cosmetic dentistry is easier, faster and safer than ever before... whether you're looking for teeth that are whiter, straighter, bigger or brighter, chances are that we can create a "star" smile for you, right here in this office!

TOOTH WHITENING, which can almost instantly brighten your smile to give you a younger, fresher appearance, is probably the most common cosmetic procedure requested, and is no doubt one of the easiest and most gratifying dental options available.

DENTAL VENEERS, which are thin porcelain or ceramic "shells" bonded onto the front of your teeth, are another popular cosmetic request. They are a good option for people who are looking for a way to cosmetically straighten slightly crooked or misaligned teeth, fill gaps between teeth and even whiten teeth that might not otherwise respond to regular whitening.

Missing one or more teeth? It's vitally important to take care of filling the gap, not only from an aesthetic viewpoint, but also from a dental health perspective. Ask us why it's so important, and to explain your teeth-replacement options, from bridges to dental implants.

Talk to us about what you'd like to see in your ideal smile, and we'll be happy to create a winning Hollywood smile for you!

OPEN WIDE FOR THE INSIDE STORY

Dental patients usually come in for checkups with one thing in mind: to make sure their teeth and gums are healthy, and to confirm that there are no problems with decay. What you might not realize is that dentists can often tell what other health problems or habits you may have too, just by looking in your mouth.



For example, you've probably noticed that heavy smokers tend to sport yellowish teeth and that they have a higher chance of developing oral cancer than non-smokers, but did you know that 41 percent of daily smokers over the age of 65 are toothless? The reason: smoking can raise your chances of developing calculus on your teeth, leading to deep pockets between the teeth and gums and eventually loss of the bone and tissue supporting your teeth.

Bleeding gums, dry mouth, fungal infections and cavities are often an indicator of a serious health issue like HIV, leukemia or diabetes. There is a proven link between diabetes and gum disease, as high blood sugar levels create a perfect source of food for bacteria in your mouth. The bacteria then attack the protective layer of enamel on your teeth until you develop cavities, in addition to periodontal or gum disease.

Patients with bulimia, an eating disorder involving repeated vomiting, can't hide their purging habits from their dentist, as the hydrochloric acid in vomit dissolves the teeth's protective outer coating, the enamel. Once the enamel wears away, the acid eats into the softer dentin underneath, quickly wearing down the teeth. While someone suffering from bulimia may not want to share that news with their dentist, it may be wise to ask for tips – everything from the need for increased brushing and flossing, to fluoride applications to help repair tooth damage, to restoring already-damaged teeth with resins or crowns – to save as much of the remaining natural teeth structure as possible.

When it comes to the connection between the mouth and the heart, there is some evidence to suggest that poor oral health – even more than high cholesterol and triglyceride levels – can increase your chances of developing heart disease. One theory is that if bacteria from infected gums enters the bloodstream, it can attach to blood vessels and increase clot formation. This decreases the blood flow to the heart, aggravating high blood pressure and increasing the chances of a heart attack.

Many times osteoporosis, a disease that causes bones to lose mass and become more fragile over time, is noticed first at the dental office because the patient finds themselves losing teeth. Remember that the jaw is a bone too, and will lose density just like any other bone in your body as osteoporosis progresses.

Keep in mind that many medications for various ailments contain sugar as a primary ingredient. Watch out especially for the sugar in chewable medications and many cough and cold-type syrups as a risk factor for oral problems.

There are many mouth-body connections that are important to know about, and we are happy to discuss them with you. Being aware of possible links between your oral health and general health make it more important than ever to maintain a regular schedule of dental visits and a vigilant habit of brushing and flossing, whether you're knowingly suffering from any of the diseases mentioned here or not.



SAFEGUARD YOUR SMILE

Whether you're a recreational rink rat, a weekend warrior or a professional athlete, and regardless of whether you have a full set of pearly whites or only a few teeth in your mouth, anybody participating in a physical sport or activity is advised to protect their mouth with a full cage on their helmet, and an athletic mouthguard.

A properly fitted mouthguard is an important piece of athletic equipment: it can cushion a blow that might otherwise cause broken teeth, and injuries to the lips, tongue, face or jaw. Mouthguards are also believed to aid in reducing the severity and incidence of concussions.

The most effective mouthguard should be comfortable, resilient and tear-resistant, and not restrict your speech or breathing. There are now a variety of mouthguards available to protect the smiles of athletes in any sport:

1. THE READY-MADE, STOCK MOUTHGUARD. Although inexpensive and easily available at any sporting goods store, these "one-size-fits-all" mouthguards rarely fit anyone properly. They're bulky, hard to breathe in, and don't provide much protection.

2. THE "BOIL AND BITE" MOUTHGUARD. These are also available at retail stores. While still somewhat bulky, they provide a better fit than the stock mouthguards, as the wearer first softens them in hot water, then shapes them to their own mouth.

3. THE CUSTOM-MADE MOUTHGUARD ISSUED BY DENTISTS.

These are individually customized to your mouth, and provide the best fit, comfort and protection.

It's important to take any removable appliances, such as an orthodontic retainer, removable bridge or dentures, out of your mouth before putting your mouthguard in place. And once it's in place, remember to wear your mouthguard during practices as well as games.

Talk to us about protecting your smile with a properly fitted mouthguard.



THE "HOLE" TRUTH ABOUT ORAL PIERCING

Piercing one's lips or tongue can be a fashion statement, just like piercing the ears. However, there are a number of risks unique to oral piercing that one should be aware of before agreeing to the procedure.

First of all, the mouth contains millions of bacteria, so the risk of infection is higher with tongue piercing than with many other kinds. The fact that piercing the tongue is a painful process is obvious, but the bigger concerns are that piercing could also cause uncontrollable bleeding or nerve damage, and that the tongue could swell after piercing, possibly blocking the airway.

In addition, tongue jewelry gets in the way of talking and eating, and can damage the teeth. It's often tempting for the wearer to bite or play with mouth jewelry, leading to chipped or fractured teeth, and in some cases the need for fillings or even a root canal or tooth extraction. Researchers have also determined that the longer a piece of jewelry is in the mouth, the more likely it is that the wearer will suffer from gum recession, which can lead to loose teeth and eventual tooth loss.

If the risk of infection, pain and swelling, scar tissue, nerve damage, chipped or cracked teeth, injuries to the gums and damage to fillings isn't enough to make you think twice about your desire for an oral piercing, be aware that mouth jewelry can also lead to excessive drooling, not the most fashionable look around!

Make sure that anyone in your household considers the consequences of oral piercing carefully before making any spontaneous decisions. If the piercing has already taken place, please keep an eye out for any signs of infection and call us immediately if you notice any swelling, pain, fever, chills, shaking or a red-streaked appearance around the site of the piercing. Take the jewelry out immediately, and note that holes from oral piercings do close quickly.



SO YOU WANT TO WHITEN YOUR TEETH...

Whiter teeth can make a noticeable difference between a ho-hum smile and a brighter, sexier, more vibrant appearance. That's why, as with anything else relating to your body and overall health, if you want professional results, make sure you have your whitening done by a dental professional. This will ensure not only the best whitening results possible, but the safest too. For example:

1. We recommend that you receive a full dental examination before starting any kind of whitening program. If you have any cavities, they'll need to be filled first, as whitening solutions can penetrate into existing decay, causing sensitivity.
2. Be aware that any tooth-colored fillings or dental restorations made with resin composite materials (commonly used in crowns, veneers, bonding and bridges) will not change in color with your whitening program. Note that any exposed tooth roots will not whiten either, as they do not have an enamel layer. Ask us how we can work around these areas to give you the consistently white smile you're looking for.
3. Note that tooth whitening isn't necessarily the best option for everyone. Talk to us about your probable success with whitening as opposed to veneers, crowns or bonding.

You deserve the beautiful, white smile that only your dentist's office can provide!

3 STEPS TO A SECURE SMILE

If you're missing one or more teeth and want to fill the gap with the most natural-looking, comfortable solution possible, you'll be interested in hearing about dental implants.

A dental implant involves the installation of an artificial tooth to a metal fixture in your jaw, placed where the missing tooth was. There are usually three basic treatment steps to this procedure:

1. Once we determine that your gums are healthy and that you have enough bone in your jaw to support the implant(s), a metal post or "anchor" will be surgically placed into your jawbone.
2. After the post has fused in place, a piece called an abutment will then be attached to the top of the post to hold the false tooth.
3. The final step is the attachment of your new tooth, which will be shaped, sized and custom-designed to blend in with the color and look of the surrounding teeth, to the artificial tooth root.

If you're looking for a permanent, natural-looking replacement for one or more teeth, please call us to find out more about how implants might work for you.

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Office Team:

Christine *Office Manager/Dental Assistant*
Sherie, Alexis *Office Administrators*
Agnieszka, Molly *Registered Dental Hygienists*

Our Services Include:

- General Dentistry • Cosmetic Dentistry
- Emergency Dental Care • Oral Surgery
- Bad Breath Advice & Treatment
- Tooth Whitening • Denture Fittings
- Dental Implants • Bonding & Veneers
- Crowns & Bridges • Invisalign® Orthodontics