



## *The Tooth, The Whole Tooth And Nothing But The Tooth...*

Over the past 30+ years of my practice, quite a few of my patients have heard me say these words – mostly to elicit a smile and lift the spirit. But underneath the humor is both the conviction to save teeth, and the reality that it is difficult to match the quality of natural teeth.

Although dentistry has evolved into a sophisticated art and science, still, we can only approximate nature. Most importantly, when teeth are removed, the feel that the attached nerves provide to the jaw is lost. Implants cannot reproduce that feel, and dentures are a serious compromise that requires a change-of-life type of adaptation.

Many of my patients have expressed to me that, “I didn’t realize the importance of my teeth until they were gone.” More than a few times I have heard, “If you were my dentist back then, I’d still have my teeth today.” These are kind and flattering words which I know can be shared with so many of my excellent colleagues in the profession of dentistry who are also dedicated to saving teeth.

When a tooth is lost and is not replaced, changes begin: bone and gums shrink, function changes, etc. The more teeth are lost, the greater the deterioration of the smile, the bite and the chewing mechanism.

**Avoid this scenario** – Care for your teeth, maintain your dental health with:

1. **Brushing & flossing** – as often as you can, realistically.
2. **Professional cleanings** – 3, 4 or 6 months apart, as your hygienist recommends based on individual needs.
3. Try additional **home-care** technology:
  - a. Water flossers
  - b. Electric/sonic toothbrushes
  - c. Dental pick plaque removers
  - d. Proper brushes
  - e. Floss holders
  - f. Floss threaders for bridgework

4. Use **mouthwash** once or twice a day to lower the bacterial count.

### **Endodontic Treatment**

When decay and subsequent fillings are deep, pulp tissue in the core of the tooth can die and begin to decompose. That makes the nerve fire constantly – toothache! Root canal therapy relieves this pain by cleaning out the decaying pulp. The natural tooth can then be restored, and the bite “feel” is preserved by the nerves surrounding the tooth.

### **Crowns**

Crowns protect weak teeth from cracking and splitting, especially teeth that have had root canal. Teeth that are crowned sooner may also avoid the need for root canal – ask me about this when you come in!

Until then, stay happy!

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