

Confronting Dental Myths

from a Holistic Perspective

“The practice of holistic dentistry,” explains Dr. Carl McMillan, “is simply the acknowledgement that dental health and overall physical health are inextricably linked, and profoundly impacted by toxins in our environment. Our goal, always, is to seek the safest, least toxic way to provide dental care.”

“Further, by viewing dental health through that holistic lens, we have a better understanding of the causes and treatments for common dental problems.”

SUGAR CAUSES TOOTH DECAY? NOT SO SIMPLE

“The problem of tooth decay is a good example of this approach,” he observes.

“The commonly held belief is that cavities result from poor dental hygiene—too much sugar and not enough brushing and flossing to remove the ‘sugar bugs’—the bacteria (*Streptococcus Mutans*) that cause decay.

“But it’s not that simple. Through my 35 years of practice, I’ve noticed striking patterns among people who get decay and people who don’t. Those patterns relate to body chemistry—specifically to the acidity or alkalinity of the mouth (measured by pH levels.)

“Mysteriously, some of those patients had little plaque and did a reasonably good job taking care of their teeth, but nonetheless would have frequent decay. But other patients whose hygiene was poor would be cavity-free. What accounts for the difference? Those with decay were very acidic—always below a pH of 7, and typically 5.6 to 6.2; Those without decay had a pH well above 7—often 7.4, 7.8 or more. The acidic patients also had more mouth inflammation, and their tissues were more tender and sensitive to injection. In short, the more acidic the patient’s biochemistry, the more tooth decay.

“So, it’s about biochemistry more than simple hygiene,” he explains. “It’s about how your body’s particular biochemistry produces acidity. And excessive acidity leads to an environment that invites the bacteria that we call ‘sugar bugs.’ The sugar bugs ultimately cause the tooth decay, but they don’t create the acidic environment. They don’t survive if the mouth is alkaline—but an acidic mouth provides the perfect environment for the bacteria to thrive.”

Many things contribute to an acidic body chemistry, notes Dr. McMillan, “including diet, stress, exposure to chemicals, metals in our bodies (such as metal crowns and fillings), and some medications. Because it’s a complex problem, addressing body acidity is a holistic process, but it can be done.”



Dr. McMillan

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HOLISTIC DENTISTRY

Dr. McMillan’s commitment to this holistic approach is reflected in his decades-long membership in the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT).

“The IAOMT is a global network of dentists, health professionals, and scientists who support and disseminate research on the biocompatibility of dental products, including the risks of mercury fillings, fluoride, and root canals,” he explains. “Over many years, this research has been invaluable in shaping my practice and keeping me abreast of the ever-changing information on biological, holistic approaches to dentistry.”

Dr. McMillan is a charter member, and former president of the International Academy of Mercury Free Dentists, and served on the Board of Directors of the IAOMT for over 20 years. He is also a member of the Holistic Dental Association and the International Association of Biologic Medicine and Dentistry, and is a Naturopathic Doctor.

A HOLISTIC DENTIST:

- Places a priority on overall health; knows that everything he does has the potential for long-term ill effects on a patient.
- Refuses to place materials known to have toxic effects on the human body. He practices by the Oath, “First, do no harm.”
- Never uses mercury amalgam in his practice and takes special precautions to protect the patient, staff, and himself from toxins in the office.
- Believes that each patient is unique and not all patients respond the same to all materials.
- Listens to a patient’s needs and wants, and offers information as part of the healing process.
- Insists on science that proves safety rather than science that claims “no proof of harm.”
- Has special equipment, knowledge, and training to protect patients and staff.
- Knows about a range of alternative materials and alternative/integrative medicine practices.
- Seeks to understand the implications of dental health/disease on other areas of the human body.

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