

Dental care keeps you looking, and feeling, good

Fredericton, NB - April 26, 2011 - “Many people think that removing a tooth with a cavity or one surrounded by gum disease is an easy and inexpensive way to relieve a toothache and solve the problems of infection and swelling,” said Dr. Larry Peacocke, President of the NB Dental Society. “Treatments like root canals, crowns or even gum surgery may be thought of as unnecessary when the obvious solution is to remove the tooth.”

Recent studies have compared the nutritional status and overall health of adults with a full complement of 28 teeth (excluding the wisdom teeth) and those with missing teeth. People with missing teeth are prone to malnutrition, hypertension, chronic heart disease, and kidney disease. This is thought to be because people with missing teeth have significantly lower chewing ability and prefer to eat softer, more processed foods that have lower nutritional quality. People with missing teeth avoid biting into raw fruit and vegetables as well as full-grain dietary fibre. As a result, they have lower blood levels of beta carotene (the building block for Vitamin A), folate, and vitamin C: the vitamins that are necessary to protect against chronic inflammation and heart disease.

In addition, when an adult tooth is removed, the supporting bone slowly disappears leading to bone loss around the remaining teeth. This supporting bone is necessary to retain any dentures that replace the missing tooth. If a tooth has been missing for a long time, the dentures will stop fitting because the bone structure is changing. Ill-fitting dentures can contribute to mouth soreness, ulcerations and fungal infections.

Missing teeth do not just cause problems in the oral cavity. Tooth loss has an impact on general health and is a risk factor for malnutrition, loss of self-sufficiency, and deterioration in quality of life.

People with fewer than 10 teeth have a seven-fold increased risk of chronic heart disease and are at a greater risk for heart attacks.

“Caring for your teeth by preventing and treating cavities and gum disease is crucial,” said Dr. Peacocke. “Keeping your teeth healthy for a long time not only impacts your appearance and your oral health, but it can influence your nutrition and your overall health as well.”

April is Oral Health Month and the New Brunswick Dental Society is participating with a public education campaign highlighting the message “Not everybody can see it. But your Dentist can.”

The New Brunswick Dental Society exists to promote professional growth, high ethical standards and quality care giving through communication, education and the regulation of dentistry in New Brunswick.