

Give yourself the gift of healthy teeth!

The holidays are a special time. A time for great food, great company and hopefully a great smile. But I'll tell you from experience, some people are not smiling during this time of year. The stress from all the planning and shopping can really get to people, and as usual, dental care is at the bottom of the priority list. Here are some common questions I tend to get at the office around this time. Hopefully the answers will make your holidays a little less stressful!

I really wanted to come in this month, but I'm just too busy. Do my insurance benefits roll over?

Dental insurance plans tend to have a fixed annual maximum that does not roll over. Either you use it or you lose it. But don't worry, you still might be able to get in to see the dentist before the end of the year. Just remember, you're not the only one who is scrambling to get in before December 31. If your dental office tells you they have no appointments remaining, ask to be put on a short list. Busy schedules also mean a good number of cancellations, and dental offices want to fill those gaps as quickly as they can. Make it clear to the office staff that you want to be notified as soon as there is an opening. Be flexible!

I have a lot of holiday parties coming up. Is there anything I can do to give my smile a boost?

There are a plethora of ways to enhance your smile, and in the end this question has to be answered on an individual level. However, the quickest and easiest way to a brighter smile is the one-hour whitening procedure. Although the results don't last long, it will definitely give you the boost you're seeking. It's actually become quite popular to gift someone a one-

hour whitening. It's something that can go hand in hand with gift cards for a massage or spa therapy. Just keep in mind that for long-term results, it always is better to couple one-hour whitening with a take home whitening system.

If you have specific aspects of your smile that you don't like, the holidays are a great time to get them fixed. Finally correcting that one crooked tooth, or replacing that older stained filling can give you the confidence to smile again. So much of our social interactions have to do with first impressions and face-to-face conversations. Enhancing your smile can mean the difference between enjoying holiday parties or dreading them.

Can't I just take a break from all the brushing and flossing? I'll make a fresh start in January, I promise!

Trust me, it's easy to come up with an excuse for not flossing. But, if anything, the holidays should be a time when you increase your brushing and flossing regimen, not decrease it! Remember we've had a steady decline since Halloween. We binge on candy, then we sit down to Thanksgiving dinner, and now December comes and we're ready to cheat on those diets for just one more month. And who can blame us? Another month of rich, delicious foods and treats; it's hard to say no.

For your teeth, you can enjoy those rich, high carb foods, but drink plenty of water afterwards. If you are brushing only once a day, increase it to twice. If you already brush in the morning and evening, sneak in one more brushing after lunch. Try to floss regularly. Start out slow and build it up. Consistency in flossing really is the key to effective prevention. Everyone feels that one big piece of meat and flosses it out immediately.

That's not what causes the damage. It's a steady stream of undetectable loose carbs floating in the pockets between your teeth that can collect and cause disease and decay over time. Regular flossing will keep those particles out and keep the bacteria in check.

This tooth was hurting last month, but it feels fine now. I can just come in after the New Year to get it fixed right?

If you have had pain in a tooth more than once, then there is likely something going on that requires treatment. The worst thing you can do is put it off, especially around the holidays. Do you have any idea the number of emergency calls we get right around Christmas and New Years? Too many! Unfortunately, my office is closed for Christmas and New Years, in fact, most dental offices are closed. That puts you in a very uncomfortable position during what should be one of the happiest times of the year. If you have even the slightest feeling that something may be wrong, get it checked out as soon as you can. You never want to make a decision about your dental care while you're in severe pain.

With any luck, this advice will serve you well as you traverse the stresses and joys of this last month of the year. Happy Holidays!

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