Menopause and Changes to Your Mouth

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Menopause Can Bring About Change in Your Mouth as Well

As women approach the time of menopause, they can expect to experience several changes throughout their bodies, including their mouths. Even women that have had dental health problems before may find that during this chapter of their life, they begin to experience an increased risk of dental complications caused by the fluctuations in estrogen and our increased age. So let's talk about oral hygiene and menopause.

Women may note that they have an increase in:

- Gum disease and gingivitis.
- Bleeding gums.
- Bone loss (periodontal disease).
- Osteoporosis of the jaw.
- Burning mouth syndrome.
- Dry mouth (xerostomia).
- Alteration of taste.

Seeing your dentist regularly can help catch symptoms of these conditions in their earliest forms, providing the chance at better treatment. For instance, when bleeding gums are addressed when bleeding is still minor, proper care can prevent it from becoming advanced gum disease (which often leads to tooth loss.) Although a clinical exam can screen for some of these symptoms, other conditions directly linked with bone health and quantity may need to be checked through X-rays such as full-mouth panoramic films.

See Your Dentist at Least Twice a Year

When it comes to oral hygiene and menopause, regular cleanings every 6 months are recommended. Having these cleanings can prevent tartar buildup from causing rapid bone loss around the teeth. Your dentist or hygienist will also let you know which areas may be at an increased risk for infection and need a little more attention than others. Brushing the gums gently at least twice each day, and cleaning under the gums with floss or a water flosser once a day is not an option. It is the only way to prevent bacteria from building up and taking advantage of your risk of increased bone loss. Should your gums bleed chronically or become mobile, even with regular flossing, then let your dentist know immediately.

Prescription mouth rinses and toothpaste can help limit the amount of inflammation and bleeding in your gums, but the key is to keep the area as free from bacteria as possible. Some women may continue to have some inflammation and bleeding even if their oral hygiene is impeccable. Certain medications such as blood thinners or an Aspirin regimen may also contribute to this.

Stomatitis

Burning mouth can make it difficult to eat properly, affecting your nutrition. Some women will experience a severe burning sensation throughout their mouths. If you have a prosthesis such as a denture or partial, this can make it difficult or even impossible to wear it. Mix one part milk of magnesia and one part liquid antihistamine as a mouth rinse that offers temporary relief of burning mouth syndrome. Some women even suffer from eating disorders during menopause, which can lead to a host of dental complications. It’s important to remember that if you suffer from an eating disorder, you can confidentially discuss this with your dentist and ask for input on how to minimize damage like enamel erosion on your teeth.

Prevention and Early Care Is Key

A dry mouth can also increase your risk of developing tooth decay. Increase your water intake and supplement with a fluoride rinse every night. If you begin to develop cavities, have them treated as soon as possible before they can become too advanced. Using a xylitol gum or spray can also deter plaque from building up on your teeth throughout the day. Routine visits with your dentist will help you to prevent costly, advanced-need dental problems later on.