

stDental Times

Oral Care for Cancer Patients

In celebration of **Relay for Life**, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, Dr. Huang would like to remind patients about the importance of oral care for cancer patients.

sometimes unaware that it can affect their teeth, gums, salivary glands, and other oral issues. In some cases, patients delay or stop their cancer treatment because they experience painful side effects in their mouths.



More than one million Americans

will be diagnosed with cancer each year, and about 40 percent will develop serious mouth problems as the result of their treatment. Patients who undergo cancer treatment are

“To give patients their best chance to fight cancer, the dentist must be added to the cancer treatment team and the patient must visit the dentist before beginning radiation therapy,” says Dr. Huang.

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Relay for Life will be held in Morgan Hill on May 20-21 at Oakwood Country School. Address: 105 John Wilson Way. Look for the auction item donated by Santa Teresa Dental.

What are Dental Veneers?

Are your front teeth stained or chipped? Are they slightly crooked? Do you have a noticeable gap between your teeth that makes you feel uncomfortable when you smile or talk? Veneers (aka laminates) may be an option to a more pleasing, attractive smile.

poorly shaped or slightly crooked. Veneers may be used to lighten front teeth that are naturally yellow or have a gray hue that can't be whitened by bleaching.

Unlike a crown, which covers the entire tooth, a veneer is a thin covering that is placed over the front (visible) part of the tooth. Dr. Huang applies veneers in a simple, comfortable procedure that takes just a few visits.

Veneers are sometimes used to correct teeth that are chipped or worn. They may also be used to correct uneven spaces or a diastema (a large, noticeable gap between the upper front teeth).

Veneers are a popular treatment option for several reasons. Veneers generally are placed on upper front teeth that are severely discolored,

Veneers are extremely thin shells made of a strong and durable dental ceramic. Dr. Huang removes a small amount of enamel from the front and sides of the tooth.

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Cancer

During treatment, the dentist can work with the oncologist and the patient to monitor any changes in their mouth and make recovery as comfortable as possible.

According to figures from the National Institute of Health (NIH), oral complications occur in almost all patients receiving radiation for head and neck malignancies, in more than 75 percent of bone marrow transplant recipients and in nearly 40 percent of patients receiving chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and bone marrow transplantation can cause several oral side effects including:

- Inflammation and ulceration of the mouth lining
- Painful mouth and gums
- An increase in the risk of developing oral and systemic infections
- Xerostomia (commonly called “dry mouth”), a condition in which saliva is thickened, reduced or absent
- Rampant tooth decay
- Burning, peeling or swelling tongue
- Stiffness in the jaw
- Impaired ability to eat, speak or swallow
- Change in ability to taste
- Poor diet because of problems with eating

Before and After Care

“When possible, schedule a thorough dental checkup at least one month before treatment begins,” says Dr. Huang. At this visit, update your medical history record and provide the telephone number for the physician who is handling the cancer treatment. Your dentist may recommend having your oral diseases treated early and extracting all hopeless and questionable teeth.

During cancer treatment, you should continue to gently brush teeth with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day unless the dentist recommends otherwise. Your dentist may recommend a mouthrinse in addition to

daily brushing and/or a prescription fluoride gel at home to help reduce the likelihood of tooth decay.

“Continue to gently floss once a day. If the gums are sore or bleeding in places, you should avoid those areas but continue to floss other teeth until the condition improves,” he says.

Patients who receive cancer treatment of the head and neck sometimes discover that they can not tolerate the flavor of their regular toothpaste. If this happens try another flavor that will not irritate mouth tissues.

Rinse your mouth several times a day with a solution of baking soda and salt, followed by a plain water rinse. Use one-quarter teaspoon of baking soda and one-eighth teaspoon of salt in one cup of warm water. “This is particularly helpful if you experience vomiting after cancer treatment,” says Dr. Huang.

If xerostomia develops, your dentist may recommend a saliva replacement available at pharmacies. Taking frequent sips of water, sucking on ice chips or sugar-free candy, or chewing sugar-free gum may provide relief.

“Eat a balanced diet. Eat soft, moist foods such as cooked cereals, mashed potatoes and scrambled eggs if your mouth is sore,” says Dr. Huang. “And of course avoid using tobacco and alcohol.”

Schedule regular dental checkups. Your dentist and physician both want your treatment to be as safe and effective as possible.

For more answers to your questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Huang at DrHuang@stDental.com.



Cancer patients must visit their dentist BEFORE radiation treatment.

“To give patients their best chance to fight cancer, the dentist must be added to the cancer treatment team,” says Dr. Andrew Huang.

Veneers

This makes room for the veneer and prevents the restored tooth from feeling or looking bulky or unnatural.

Next, the dentist makes an impression of the prepared teeth so that the shape of the preparations and surrounding teeth can be replicated in the dental laboratory. The dentist also looks for the shade that will best match or blend with the other teeth. The impressions are sent to a dental laboratory that makes the veneers to fit your individual teeth. This may take several days.

At the next visit, Dr. Huang places the veneers on the teeth to check the fit and shape. After any adjustments, the teeth are cleaned and the veneers are then bonded to the teeth with dental cement. Further adjustments may be done at a subsequent ap-

pointment.

Teeth must be healthy and free of decay and active periodontal disease before any cosmetic procedures. Dr. Huang can treat these conditions before a veneer is made. Veneers require less removal of tooth enamel than crowns. However, the process is not reversible once the enamel is removed.

Patients who clench or grind their teeth are not good candidates for veneers, because the thin veneers may chip or break. If you clench or grind, Dr. Huang may suggest a plastic dental nightguard to be worn while sleeping, which can help minimize stress on your teeth.

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Veneers are used to correct teeth that are stained or chipped.

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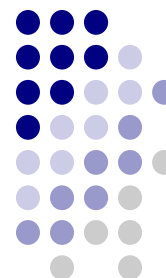
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Questions you want us to answer in the next newsletter? Write or Email us!



Dr. Ann Lien & Dr. Andrew Huang of Santa Teresa Dental, "Your referral is the best compliment. We couldn't have grown without your support."

Veneers

No special maintenance is needed other than good oral hygiene each day. Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and clean between your teeth once a day with floss.

Because veneers are somewhat brittle, they might chip or peel. Avoid biting your fingernails and chewing on hard objects, such as pencils or ice. Like any dental restorations, it is possible, over time and with wear, for veneers to dislodge. In that case, new ones might be needed. As with all your dental care, discuss your expectations and treatment options thoroughly with Dr. Huang. Regular dental visits are a must for maintaining healthy teeth.

Community Involvement

We support the following organizations:



Our support are in the form of sponsorships, attendance, publication of articles associated with the events, auction item donations, purchase of ad space, and monetary donations.

Mission Statement

Santa Teresa Dental will bring quality dentistry at an affordable price to the community. We will focus on one patient at a time. All patients are treated like family. Patients will be seen in a timely manner. Patient comfort and satisfaction are our priorities. Our goal is to educate patients regarding the importance of oral health and regular dental check-ups. We will serve not only one satisfied patient, but one satisfied family, then finally one satisfied community.