

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU CHOOSE YOUR NEXT DENTIST

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE

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1. Proper Diagnosis

A complete examination should be performed to assure proper diagnosis. Proper diagnosis helps determine an individualized treatment plan.

At The Dental Practice we conduct a complete examination that includes an oral cancer screening, appropriate X-rays, and periodontal screening (checking for gum disease). We check for decay and for broken or failing fillings and check all other dental work. We may do a smile analysis, and we use magnification and intra-oral photography to ensure a complete and proper diagnosis to project appropriate treatment recommendations.

2. Preventive Dentistry

Patient education is the most effective way to prevent dental disease. At The Dental Practice, we are committed to helping our patients understand the advantages of preventive dentistry in the areas of dental decay, gum disease, and traumatic dental injuries.

Youth:

The needs of patients change throughout life. Prevention of early childhood decay starts as early as 1 year old. We want to help our young patients and parents develop good habits that will last a lifetime. Dental disease is preventable and professional guidance can make the difference.

Fluoride:

Fluorides, sealants and regular professional visits are some of the important ways we help prevent decay in children. Fluorides make teeth more resistant to acid attack. That is what decay really is - the slow repeated dissolving of the minerals in a tooth by acids. Try putting an egg in a large glass of Coke overnight and you will find the shell soft and weak in the morning.

Sealants:

Sealants are a plastic material that fills in the deep grooves in the molar teeth where plaque can stick easily. By taking away this niche for bacterial plaque we dramatically reduce the total amount of plaque children have in their mouths. Sealants also protect the molar grooves directly, the place where most decay gets started.

Sports/ Injuries:

We want to help guide our physically active patients to help prevent dental injuries. We also try to help patients know what to do if they or a child has an injury. Stock and custom mouthguards help protect teeth during contact sports. Often they are required.

For individual sports and extreme sports we recommend custom mouthguards. They are made from a mold of the patient's mouth to fit exactly. That means they are less bulky and more comfortable and allow better speech while being worn. They are a multiple layer laminate material that provides maximum protection. It is the type of protection that professional athletes wear.

Seniors:

We want to help older patients prevent dental problems associated with age changes. These can include broken and cracked teeth, decay on exposed root surfaces and gum and soft tissue disorders often associated with a dry mouth. Saliva can diminish with age and a variety of medications. Fluoride helps here also.

Diet:

You should realize that what you eat and drink has a huge impact on dental disease. High sugar content soda drinks have caused a new epidemic of decay in teenagers and young adults. Your dental professional can help you identify diet items that increase your risk of disease.

Tobacco:

If you use tobacco in any form there are some things you need to know: First, stopping tobacco use is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health – more important than exercise, more than losing weight. You are probably aware of the health risks of tobacco use such as cancer, lung disease, and heart disease. Smoking increases the risk of oral cancers dramatically.

What most patients don't know is that smoking increases the risk and severity of gum disease. New research shows that gum disease increases heart disease risk. That means smoking is linked directly and indirectly to heart disease. Most people make 4 to 6 serious attempts before they are able to quit. Your dentist can help you with quitting strategies.

3. Plaque and Tartar

Plaque is the soft, sticky layer of bacteria that is constantly forming on the teeth. It is the cause of most dental diseases. Brushing and flossing can remove it. Tartar (calculus) is a buildup of plaque that has hardened either above or below the gum line. It is basically petrified plaque that cannot be removed with a toothbrush. Tartar can only be removed by a professional cleaning.

The Dental Practice has two registered dental hygienists to remove plaque and tartar, provide gum therapy, and patient education.

4. Gum Disease and Tooth Loss

The American Dental Association reports that 75-80% of all adults have or will have some form of gum disease. Gum disease is the leading cause of tooth loss in the USA. Early treatment is the key.

Gum disease, correctly known as “periodontal disease”, is a bacterial infection of the gums and jawbone that hold the teeth.

Signs of gum disease are:

- Bleeding gums
- Swelling of gums around teeth
- Shifting of teeth
- Breath odor
- Receding gums

At The Dental Practice we regularly screen for early signs of gum disease, provide treatment and maintenance to control gum disease.

5. Tooth Decay

Dental decay is a result of bacteria attacking the outer surface of the tooth. Fluorides make teeth more resistant to acid attack. That is what decay really is - the slow repeated dissolving of the minerals in a tooth by acid. Try putting an egg in a large glass of Coke overnight and you will find the shell soft and weak in the morning.

At The Dental Practice we use a concentrated fluoride varnish for isolated areas of beginning decay, yearly fluoride treatments for children with developing teeth, sealants for permanent molars, and regular patient education to prevent decay. With a good diet low in sugars and acids, proper daily home care, and regular professional care, decay can be prevented.

6. Cosmetic Dentistry

Dental makeovers are becoming very popular, even common. They can change your smile when dental procedures such as crowns, veneers, and tooth colored fillings are used.

The appearance of the teeth has a dramatic effect on both the person's attractiveness to others and on ones own self-image and self-esteem. While the appearance of the teeth is one of the most important contributors to facial beauty, it is also probably the most often neglected when improvements to appearance are sought.

Correction of spaces and gaps, cracked and chipped teeth, and crooked teeth have become more common, less invasive, and more effective for correction of deformities and cosmetic dental problems. The effects of these procedures can be nothing short of dramatic. An attractive smile can increase self-confidence. Now you can have a beautiful smile. It is a choice.

Crowns:

A crown is a dental restoration that can restore the entire top of a tooth. A tooth that is badly broken down from wear or decay may require such a procedure. Large fillings can act like a wedge to crack and break teeth. A crown works like the ring around a barrel to hold a tooth together and give it the strength it needs.

Porcelain Veneers:

A veneer is a thin piece of porcelain facing that can change the shape, contour or color of a single tooth or an entire smile.

Tooth-Colored Fillings (Composites):

Teeth have been restored for many years with silver fillings, but today there is a new and better way to restore teeth using tooth-colored resin fillings called composite. Composite can help strengthen teeth. The strength of the adhesive agent used to bond the composite to the tooth is very strong.

Orthodontics:

Orthodontics offers many benefits in addition to improved appearance. Among them is an improved bite for better and more comfortable chewing. Straight and well-aligned teeth look attractive. They are also easier to take care of and can be more resistant to gum disease later in life. Orthodontics can begin early for children and take advantage of natural growth and development. That often means less complex treatment later to gain ideal results. Orthodontics is not just for children anymore. A large percentage of orthodontics done in America is done on adult patients. Some orthodontics are even done on retirees.

7. About Fillings

Silver fillings:

- Silver fillings do not bond to tooth structure. They depend on mechanical retention and often require removal of healthy tooth structure to create undercuts.
- Silver fillings do not strengthen teeth.
- Silver fillings can act as a wedge to crack and break teeth.
- Metal can deform and change shape with repeated use. This causes stress that cracks teeth.
- Silver fillings contain mercury. Although it is a very low amount and deemed safe by the government, mercury is still considered a toxic substance.
- Silver fillings discolor teeth.
- Metal fillings can conduct temperature and electrical changes deep into the tooth.

Composite Fillings:

- Composite materials can bond predictably to tooth structure and create a micro-mechanical seal. We only need to remove diseased or damaged tooth structure.
- Composite restorations can actually help restore some strength to the tooth.
- Composite restorations are more dimensionally stable and less likely to act as a wedge.
- Composite restorations are tooth-colored and sometimes can't even be seen.
- Composite restorations are temperature and electrical insulators.

Generally speaking about restoring teeth

- No filling is perfect.
- All dental materials can wear from function.
- All are subject to oral hygiene failures and secondary decay (decay next to the fillings).
- Fillings are designed to replace missing or lost tooth structure caused by disease (decay) or fracture/wear
- When enough tooth structure is missing, different materials are used to restore teeth for predictable long-term success, like a crown or an onlay. Crowns act like a band or belt surrounding the tooth, like the ring around a barrel. When you chew, it acts like a band instead of a wedge.

At The Dental Practice we take pride in our dental makeovers. Many photographs are available showing before and after views of the kind of work we do and what is possible. At The Dental Practice, Dr. Rabedeaux uses composite fillings exclusively; silver fillings are a thing of the past.

We also offer tooth whitening which can brighten your smile in only 2 weeks. For more information please visit our website, www.newtoncosmeticdentist.com.

8. Implants/ Replacement of Missing Teeth

What about those loose and uncomfortable dentures? What about missing teeth? Implants are basically artificial tooth roots placed in the jawbone. They can be used for replacing missing teeth or for securing loose fitting dentures.

Why should you consider replacing missing teeth? Think about the bricks in an arched doorway. If you remove even one brick, the others can move and shift. The strength and integrity of the arch is lost. Teeth are the same way. When even one is lost, the other can shift and move. This throws the bite off and starts a chain reaction of destruction. A domino effect occurs.

9. Occlusion-Your Bite

Jaw joints (TMJ) can be checked for function and stability. We can assess if there is a problem with the joint. It is also important to check the muscles and the way the teeth come together.

When the seated TMJ and the place where the teeth fit together best is not in harmony, muscle activity is greatly increased. This can manifest itself in headaches, clenching, grinding, gum recession, sore jaw joints, popping and clicking joints, sore, loose or sensitive teeth, cracked, broken and worn teeth and the common nonvascular migraine headache. We treat a lot of patients with TMJ/TMD problems.

It is a little bit like a door with loose hinges. It can be hard to find the place where it closes best. Another example is the front end alignment of a car. When it is not aligned, the ride is not as smooth and the tires wear out early.

Sometimes a misaligned bite can be corrected with a simple bite adjustment procedure called equilibration. We reshape the surfaces of some of the teeth with selective grinding to realign the system so the joints and teeth are in harmony and your muscles, joint and bite are all comfortable. Other times more work is needed to correct the problem. Proper occlusion is important to function, comfort, and long lasting oral health.

10. . Patient Protection and Insurance

Patient protection is reported to be an important concern for a growing number of people. Sterilization, patient confidentiality and blood borne diseases have all been addressed in State and Federal laws to protect the patient.

At The Dental Practice we strive to exceed all laws and guidelines. We use universal precautions such as safety glasses, masks, and gloves. We sterilize our instruments and test our sterilizing equipment. We use single-use disposable items when possible. We take your privacy seriously and take many steps to protect it.

Dr. Rabedeaux uses what he would want for his family and friends as a guide to what treatment needs to be done. That is because many dental patients become friends and some are like family. An insurance company is not interested in what is best for you, only what will cost the insurance company the least amount.

Dental insurance rarely covers 100% of all dental treatment. It is a benefit with limitations. Sadly, many plans have not changed the annual maximum benefit limits for over 40 years.

Informed patients should read their dental insurance booklet provided by the insurance carrier and be aware of the limitations. Historically, dental insurance has not kept up with the pace of inflation. It is probably best to think of it as a way to help offset some of the cost of needed care. Dental insurance is complex and often difficult to understand.

We assist you by:

- Filing insurance claims as a courtesy
- Completing treatment plan estimates
- Offering Outside options for financing (if needed)

Do Credentials Matter?

Yes, credentials reflect education and experience. Dr. Rabedeaux has earned his Mastership in the Academy of General Dentistry and belongs to a variety of other dental organizations that reflect educational excellence. He highly values continuous education. The entire staff is

professionally trained to meet your dental needs. Whether you are interested in preventive, reconstructive, or cosmetic dentistry, we can help you achieve your perfect smile.

Visit our website to learn more about Dr. Rabedeaux, as well as to meet our entire staff.
www.thedentalpractice.net