

Treating Frequent Headaches--Without Drugs

If you suffer from frequent headaches, neck pain or jaw pain, you might want to visit a dentist before you reach for any painkillers.

Experts say that people with misaligned bites often have jaw and neck muscles that are overworked. Those over-tired muscles can lead to a number of ailments--including headaches, neck and jaw pain--that people don't associate with dental problems. LVI Global, the leading postgraduate training facility for dentists, specifically deals with such issues. LVI Global trains dentists to use a number of techniques that help improve jaw position by focusing on what's known as the "neuromuscular bite." Here's a closer look at how an LVI Global-trained neuromuscular dentist might treat the pain caused by what is known as TMD:

pain in the head and neck, painful clicking or popping of the jaw joint, swallowing problems, excessive snoring or sleep apnea and limited mouth opening, among other things.

Diagnosis

When checking for TMD, a neuromuscular dentist takes a patient's history and does a physical exam of the teeth, posture, head and neck. The dentist may also conduct a series of tests using non-invasive instruments. If it is determined that the patient's bite is the likely cause of the pain, the neuromuscular dentist will identify a new jaw position that leaves the patient's jaw muscles in a relaxed state.

Treatment

There are a number of treatment options, but the process often starts with a patient wearing for a short period of time what's known as an orthotic. An orthotic is a custom-made, plastic appli-

ance that can be worn over the teeth. It does not permanently alter a patient's bite.

If, after wearing the appliance, a patient's TMD symptoms go away, it can be safely assumed they were caused by poor jaw alignment. If that's the case, patients have several options. They include dental treatment to permanently alter the bite to the new position, orthodontics or beautiful porcelain restorations. Not only is your pain eliminated but you may have a stunning new smile.

More information, including a complete list of TMD symptoms, along with a list of the location of neuromuscular dentists nationwide, is available at www.leadingdentists.com.

Headaches, neck pain and other ailments may be caused by dental problems.

NAPSI

Osteoporosis

HealthCare for Women

Osteoporosis is a disorder characterized by increased fracture risk due to impaired bone strength.

Advancing age brings some of this change to all of us. The only variables are the timing and the degree of involvement. It is estimated that 55% of Americans over age 50 have osteoporosis. Osteopenia (low bone mass) is a step along the way. Osteoporosis is a large health issue in our society. The cost of medical care incurred by osteoporotic fractures is \$15 billion dollars annually.

Fortunately, medical science has made great strides in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of this dangerous situation. One of the most important advances is DXA (Dual X-Ray Absorptiometry). This is a specially adapted technique which determines the BMD (Bone Mineral Density) of important areas of our skeleton. By doing so, it tells us a lot about the health of our bones. Talk with your doctor to see if you should have a DXA test.

If a DXA study determines that one has osteopenia or osteoporosis, changes in life style and appropriate medications can reverse the decline and improve bone health. The first steps would be to correct things that might be contributing to the problem. One example would be having too little body fat. This could be caused by anorexia or improper balance between exercise and caloric intake. Another

would be prolonged use of DMPA (Depomedroxyprogesterone acetate), the injectable contraceptive used by some women. Anticonvulsant medication and chronic use of corticosteroids can also cause problems. And, yes, this is another reason to stop smoking and to drink alcohol in moderation.

The next consideration would be getting plenty of weight-bearing exercise, such as walking or jogging. Being sure to take in 1,200-1,500 milligrams of calcium and 400 to 800 units of Vitamin D per day is also very important. Good nutrition is key here and over-the-counter supplements can bring us the desired amounts if dietary sources are not adequate. And (finally) a vote for sun exposure. Sunlight helps our skin produce Vitamin D.

If those measures are not enough there are many medications which can help, depending on the problem and the patient's tolerance for the medicines. Some are taken by mouth, some are injectable, and one is a nasal spray.

For the menopausal woman, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may be important. This is best done with a prescription for some form of estrogen. (If the woman's uterus is present she must also take a progesterone preparation). Because the rates of bone loss are greatest during the first few years of estrogen deficiency the replacement should start early. Moreover, estrogen is still the best medication for relieving hot flashes. Many women these days turn to herbal, alternative, over-the-counter remedies. They may help but it must

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be remembered that there are very few scientific studies about these preparations. Worse yet, because they are not approved or monitored by the Food and Drug Administration, only the manufacturer really knows what is inside the pill or capsule. Buyer beware.

A word about the Women's Health Initiative (WHI), a study being conducted by the National Health Institute. This study of Hormone Replacement Therapy has cost the taxpayers about \$705,000,000 but many experts feel that it has not resulted in much useful information. Some of the major problems are the small numbers of women who actually participated, the average age of the women at the beginning of the study (63 years old), and the dropout rate of about 50%. When the estrogen-only arm of the study was terminated a few summers ago many women became concerned about the hormone medication and stopped taking it. Now, experts who are continuing to analyze the data are finding that many of the risks of taking the hormones are not so worrisome after all. In fact, the authors of a study appearing in the journal "Fertility and Sterility" in 2005 concluded, "We believe that, based on all the data now available, the benefits of hormone therapy outweigh the risks."

Osteoporosis is serious, costly, somewhat preventable, and treatable. It is obviously a complicated issue and new information is developed every year. Talk with your doctor to see if you are at risk and, if you are, how your

YOUR TONGUE'S DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

Your Tongue's Dirty Little Secret--Bad Breath

While you may know that the bacteria in your mouth is the cause of 90 percent of bad breath, you may not realize the majority of smell-generating bacteria are sitting on the back of your tongue.

What's more, the majority of the over 60 million people diagnosed with oral malodor are not aware of the single best method to improve their breath--the simple act of scraping the tongue.

Tongue cleaning has been practiced for centuries and

recent literature has shown it leads to a healthy oral environment. Clinical research has created a renewed interest in tongue cleaning, since evidence has shown that infection-causing bacteria--the primary cause of bad breath--increased tenfold after a week of not cleaning the tongue.

A recent scientific study on the effectiveness of scraping the tongue found that scraping it twice daily for seven days had a significant effect on the levels of bacteria in the mouth and also decreased bad breath.

The subjects in the study added tongue scraping as part of their normal daily

oral care routine of brushing their teeth and using a mouth rinse.

"Since most people brush their teeth and use a mouth rinse, it is clear the missing link for truly clean breath is scraping your tongue," explained Kristy Menage Bernie, Registered Dental Hygienist. "Some people mis-

takenly believe that brushing your tongue will have the same effect as scraping but the reality is to have a clean mouth and fresh breath, you need to brush, floss, scrape and rinse, in that order, and make sure you use a well-designed tongue scraper that is safe and effective, such as the one available from

BreathRx."

Tongue scrapers can be found in most well-stocked drugstores. For more information on BreathRx, log on to www.breathrx.com.