



Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,
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Q: My dentist says that my incorrect bite is leading to periodontal disease. Can this be true?

A: You may have missed a portion of your dentist's point. In itself, a poor occlusion (bite) will not cause periodontal disease. The October, 2006 issue of the Journal of the American Dental Association has an entire section on periodontitis (inflammation of the supporting structures of the teeth...particularly involving the bone) and the influence of improper biting forces. A review of many studies throughout the years up to the present day revealed a variety of results. In the end, it boiled down to a conclusion that an improper contact (usually too forceful and/or one which occurs at the wrong time) between opposing teeth does not cause periodontal disease or even loss of bone. These improper or heavy contacts may cause "occlusal trauma". In individuals with healthy gums and bone, a traumatic occlusion may create symptoms including mobility of the tooth or teeth (able to be wiggled in the tooth socket) and localized pain. Eliminating the heavy contact with an occlusal guard, or by reducing the enamel on the teeth allowed the symptoms to reverse. No bone or gingival attachment loss was involved. However, in patients with active periodontal disease caused by plaque related inflammation, teeth experiencing occlusal trauma tended to show greater disease progression than non traumatized teeth. It was also noted that the rate of healing for periodontal tissues was improved if the occlusal trauma was not present or eliminated in patients undergoing periodontal rehabilitation. The bottom line is that periodontal disease is multifactorial, with risk factors including bacterial plaque accumulation, smoking, general health, and to some degree, occlusion. I would suggest that a sound foundation for good periodontal health would begin with excellent daily hygiene, routine exams and cleaning, proper nutrition, no smoking or chewing tobacco, and perhaps proper alignment of the teeth for ease of cleaning, and chewing efficiency. Together, these positive steps will provide you with a disease free oral environment.

!Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS, 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**