Maintaining Your Oral Health With Arthritis

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Rheumatoid Arthritis and Dental Health

Periodontal disease is the leading cause of tooth loss. People with RA are twice as likely to suffer from the gum disease as people without RA. It all has to do with protein citrullination and the fact that both conditions are inflammatory diseases that affect the severity of one another.

Antibiotic Premedication

If you have severe immune suppression, or have had a joint replacement due to RA, you may need to be premedicated with an antibiotic before any type of invasive dental procedures are performed. This will limit the amount of oral bacteria that enters into your bloodstream during the treatment.

Dry Mouth Is a Serious Risk Factor for a Healthy Smile

Xerostomia is a common side effect of people with RA or that take particular prescription medications. When the mouth is dry, saliva flow keeps teeth from being cleansed and lubricated throughout the day, resulting in significantly more cavities and gum disease. Consider using xylitol gum throughout the day, drink plenty of water, and practice the absolute best oral hygiene routine possible.

Let Your Dentist Know What Medications You're Taking

Every patient should always update their medical history during dental check-ups. One of the reasons in this case is that patients with RA need to let their dentist know so the dentist can determine whether or not NSAIDs should be prescribed. NSAIDs can interfere with medications taken for RA and complicate levels that will induce renal impairment.

Alter Your Home Hygiene Plan as Needed

If you have difficulty holding or maneuvering traditional oral hygiene devices, discuss it with your hygienist. Together you can brainstorm ways and different techniques available to keep a healthy smile with RA. Proxa-brushes, brush-picks, and water flossers are an example of aids that can clean between the teeth if flossing isn't an option. Even holding a toothbrush can be something that can be made easier. Adding a bicycle handle or tennis ball to the end of your brush may make it easier for some people who don't have as tight of a grip. This is where an electric toothbrush comes in very handy, as they do all of the work for you! Adding fluoride into your daily routine can help strengthen weak enamel or cavity-prone areas caused by dry mouth or the inability to thoroughly remove bacteria.

Stick to a Routine Preventive Plan with Your Dentist

Regular preventive cleanings, x-rays, and exams can keep your teeth healthier for a longer period of time. Not only do routine cleanings keep gum disease at bay, they also allow your dentist to diagnose suspicious areas that need a little help, or decay in its earliest forms. This keeps treatment less invasive and more affordable. If cleanings are put off until gum disease symptoms are present, chances are that irreversible bone loss has already occurred.