



News Release

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Cavities Not Just Kids' Stuff

Glendale, AZ (January 24, 2008) -- Most Americans don't make it into adulthood without at least a few cavities. In fact, tooth decay affects more than 90 percent of adults over the age of 40.¹ What many don't realize is that the threat of cavities is something that you don't ever really leave behind.

"Fillings are more than just an unfortunate occurrence of childhood," said Jerry Denning, DDS, dental consultant for Delta Dental of Arizona. "Changes associated with aging can make cavities a problem for adults, no matter what their age is."

Receding gums are one of the culprits behind adult cavities. Whether due to gum disease or to overly vigorous tooth brushing, gum tissue can become swollen or damaged and expose the sensitive roots of teeth. Unlike the surfaces of teeth that are typically above the gum line, roots are not protected by hard enamel and are instead covered by a softer material known as cementum. This makes the root surfaces more susceptible to the effects of plaque buildup, which can eventually lead to decay.

When gums recede and expose the roots of teeth, it becomes especially important to maintain proper daily oral hygiene. Brush gently at least twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, giving special attention to the gumline. Gentle brushing will do the trick and will help preserve gum tissue while reducing discomfort due to sensitive exposed roots. Daily flossing and visits to the dentist for preventive care are other important tools for preserving oral health.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oral Health: Preventing Cavities, Gum Disease and Tooth Loss.



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Existing fillings can also contribute to adult cavities. As a filling weakens over time, it tends to fracture and the seal between the filling material and tooth loosens. Bacteria can accumulate in the cracks and crevices, causing acid buildup which promotes decay.

Maintaining fillings is one way to protect teeth from further decay and retain the integrity of restored teeth. Your dentist will check existing fillings and determine if a filling needs to be replaced. In some cases, failed fillings have to be replaced with crowns or may require endodontic treatment involving a root canal or tooth extraction and replacement with a bridge or implant.

“Any changes to your oral health, such as increased tooth sensitivity, swollen, painful gums or fillings that feel loose are usually signs that something isn’t right,” said Dr. Denning. “Schedule dental exams for preventive care, and don’t put off additional visits to the dentist if you experience any of these or other changes to your oral health.”

Delta Dental of Arizona is the leading dental benefits provider in Arizona with the largest network of 2,800 dentists, servicing more than 4,500 locations. Passionate about oral health and its importance to generations of families, Delta Dental of Arizona has worked for 35 years to improve oral health by emphasizing preventative care and making dental coverage accessible for a wide variety of employers, groups and individuals. Delta Dental of Arizona, in partnership with EyeMed, introduces DeltaVision, quality vision insurance plans that make maintaining healthy eyesight affordable. Quality dental, vision and FSA benefits are now available from a single, trusted source. For more information about Delta Dental of Arizona, please visit the website at www.deltadentalaz.com.

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