



Cristi Y. Cheek, D.M.D., P.C.

2872 Johnson Ferry Road
Suite 100
Marietta, Georgia 30062
(770) 993-3775

www.cheekdental.com

Economic recession and your dental health

With the economy causing such financial distress, lately dentists have been hearing many patients saying, “I just can’t afford this (dental treatment) right now.” What some patients do not realize is that they can’t afford to put off dental treatment! Delaying examinations and treatment means that potential decay, periodontal problems, or cracks in teeth are left unchecked and may worsen to become possible disasters leading to root canals, crowns, or loss of teeth – each of which is much more costly than simple repairs of dental problems detected early.

At a dental meeting recently, a colleague of mine lamented over the “holes” in his schedule, wishing the dental industry was more recession-proof...like the funeral home business. No one is able to decide to delay those services! More than the “holes,” we both discussed how many patients were requesting “patchwork/just-get-me-by” dentistry or not having treatment at all. Just this week, I had a patient who was adamant about not having x-rays taken of her teeth because she had lost her job and no longer had insurance and was concerned about the extra out-of-pocket expense. Luckily, my astute dental hygienist explained the risks of not having all the necessary diagnostic images for the examination, and the patient agreed, though reluctantly, to pay for the needed radiographs. On the x-ray, but unseen by the naked eye, under an old crown we found decay that was already large enough to cause such concern that we decided to schedule her the next day to remove and replace the crown. Left undiagnosed, she would have likely needed a root canal, or worse – lost the tooth!

Some patients are deciding to come only if they have a “problem.” Unfortunately, some dental diseases cause little to no symptoms until it is too late. Periodontal (gum) disease is often a “silent killer” of the bone that holds the teeth in place. Left to continue on its path of destruction, gum disease can cause teeth to become loose or develop abscesses, and costly surgery may be required to salvage the teeth. Some teeth may even require removal. Decay can also be painless and invisible until it reaches the nerve of the tooth. Once decay has come in contact with the nerve, root canal treatment and a crown are often necessary, and sometimes gum surgery is needed to expose deeper areas of decay. If the decay is too extensive, it may even result in the tooth’s needing to be extracted.

Preventative dentistry can make a huge difference in whether a patient needs a few hundred dollars of dental work versus a few thousand. Seeing a dentist at least every six months for an examination and any needed x-rays can not only save you money, but help you enjoy a healthier, more attractive smile which plays a role in your overall well being.

Smile Specialists!