

Are your teeth what they used to be?

Most people forget that as we age, life can take its toll on our bodies. This can be the case for our hips, for our knees, and especially for our teeth. Just because you are brushing and flossing daily, does not prevent you from doing severe damage to your teeth during the day or while you sleep. Recently, I



Dentally Speaking
by
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had a patient who was in for her six-month cleaning who reminded me of this fact. Anne, who is also a dietitian, brought it to my attention that having teeth that not only look good, but more importantly function and feel good, is something that she took for granted until we

gave her back a properly restored mouth.

When Anne came to our office, she knew she was a grinder, but she had no idea how bad it had gotten. She had very flattened front teeth and many of her old fillings and crowns were worn down and had no anatomy. She started experiencing muscular tension in her temples and jaw and even headaches that were occurring more and more frequently. When we explained

to her that it was because of the significant wear on her teeth and her destructive bite, she decided she needed to address things. When we restored her teeth with new porcelain restorations, Anne finally realized how much she had been accommodating over the years. In a passing conversation during her cleaning, Anne said, "I love my teeth! I love the way they look, but I really love that I can eat again!" I asked her to elaborate and she proceeded to tell me how she never realized how compromised her eating was because of her teeth. She stated that she began eating things that she could eat, not things that she wanted to eat. "I had a steak the other day and it was amazing! All I could eat before was soft, easy to chew foods like pasta ... and I'm a dietitian!"

Many times in life we accommodate, but we accommodate at a price. I have repeatedly seen this in practice when people are not addressing certain conditions that affect their dental health. Whether you have lost teeth, or just broken them down over the years, your bite and chewing function is compromised.

Many things can damage your teeth. These parafunctional habits and conditions can include:

1. Grinding at night
2. Clenching during the day
3. Clenching and grinding at night due to snoring and sleep apnea
4. Older fillings and crowns breaking down with age
5. Acid reflux

Whether you choose to protect your teeth with a night grinding guard or sleep apnea appliance, or if your teeth have already sustained too much damage and require proper restorations, do not make the mistake of waiting until it is too late. With the huge advancements in dentistry over the past few years, there is no reason that anyone should have compromised function or health of their teeth. If you have experienced a loss of chewing function, or if you have realized that your smile and teeth have more wear and damage than they



Anne before (above) and after (below).



should, having yourself evaluated by a comprehensive dentist could give you back what you lost. It could give you back the high quality of life that you didn't even know you had until it was gone.

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