



SEE YOUR DENTIST

Dentists Help Headache Sufferers Smile

by Bill Dickerson, DDS

(NAPSA)—People suffering from frequent headaches may want to visit the dentist.

Headaches and a number of other ailments can be linked to a poor bite—and for thousands of headaches sufferers, improving that bite could be just what the doctor ordered.

Headaches and Your Jaw

The muscles of the temple area and forehead play an important role in positioning and closing the jaw. If your bite is misaligned, it can lead to tension in those muscles—one of several possible causes of tension headaches. Also, if left untreated, the muscles may remain tense for abnormal periods of time. That can lead to poor circulation in the forehead and temples, which can be an additional cause of headaches.

A Common Condition

This misalignment of the bite is referred to as TMD, short for temporomandibular (jaw joint) disorder. It affects more than 15 percent of American adults and is particularly prevalent among women. In addition to frequent headaches, common TMD symptoms include pain in the neck, painful clicking or popping of the jaw joint, swallowing problems, excessive snoring or sleep apnea and limited mouth opening.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Postgraduate dental training facilities such as LVI Global now teach dentists to deal with TMD. The dentists learn to use a number of techniques that help improve jaw position by focusing on what's known as the "neuromuscular bite."

Treatment begins with a neuromuscular dentist taking a patient's history and performing a physical exam of the teeth, posture, head and neck. If it is determined that the patient's bite is the likely cause



A visit to the dentist could help eliminate certain headaches.

of the pain, the neuromuscular dentist will identify a new jaw position that leaves the patient's jaw muscle in a relaxed state. This is generally done by fitting the patient with a plastic jaw-repositioning appliance worn over the teeth.

The patient wears the appliance for a short time. It doesn't permanently alter the patient's bite, but if, after wearing the appliance, the patient's TMD symptoms go away, it can be safely assumed they were caused by poor jaw alignment. If that's the case, there are several options: dental treatment to permanently alter the bite to the new position, orthodontics or a simple bite adjustment.

Finding a Neuromuscular Dentist

A list of nearby neuromuscular dentists as well as more information on TMD and its symptoms is available at the Web site www.leadingdentists.com.

Dr. Dickerson is considered one of the most influential dentists in North America. He has written articles on neuromuscular and cosmetic dentistry as well as practice management. He has trained hundreds of dentists from around the world how neuromuscular dentistry can alleviate patient pain.