



Newsletter Articles

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Fixing vs. Preventing: Yins, Yangs, and Quadruple Bypass Things

By Paul Ansell - Dentist

Some inside goss here: when an oral health professional finds out they need a filling, a crown, or a root canal, there is likely a small amount of damage to their personal pride. Why? Because we should have known better. Even if we get the best filling in the world by the world's best dentist, we know that this repair does not come with a lifetime warranty and that once a tooth is worked on, it will certainly require further repairs and maintenance.

This is not to say for a minute that dentists cannot do amazing things. Faced with damaged teeth and mouths, they can patch, reconstruct, repair, remove, and replace to best replicate your smile and chewing function with great care and skill. It happens every day, and the craftsmanship on display can be truly impressive. It is also a very difficult job, and for a lot of people, being on the receiving end of dentistry is a stress and expense they would rather do without.

Most dentists would agree that when it comes to their own mouths, not having the problem in the first place is the key to longevity. Well-maintained natural teeth in a healthy, monitored, and nourished oral environment are what most dental professionals would aspire to. When we have patients with few fillings and wonderfully clean teeth well into their 70s, it is a source of great delight. However, this is not the case for most people, with Australian data suggesting that over 80% of people's teeth above the age of 75 are decayed, missing, or filled.

"They are all stuffed, and then I'll just get them pulled out and get dentures or implants." That line right there is the dental equivalent of a quadruple bypass. It's been in the making for decades. Similar comments are often used by patients who are entirely sick of a lifetime of dental problems, feel like they are fighting a losing battle, or feel that a major procedure will solve their worries once and for all and they won't have to look after things much more.

But it ain't that easy, and almost all solutions are inherently compromised, costly, and can still wear out and fail, especially with poor maintenance.

Meme-Culture Time...

If you believe you can or can't, you're right.

If you believe you can't get control of your dental health, you will continue on the same path and accept your fate where decay and gum disease result in tooth loss. If you believe you can't figure out how to maintain your own teeth and that it is easier for a dentist to manage all of your problems despite the cost, discomfort, and compromise, then that may too come to be.

If you believe you can control your dental health, you will likely need some help. But it all starts with not accepting dental disease as a normal part of life. Just because something happens frequently does not make it normal. A damaged or decayed tooth should be the cue to revisit your diet, oral hygiene habits, or dig a bit deeper into your general health for factors that are influencing the situation. What is out of balance? Be curious as to what has changed and what, in turn, you might need to change in order to remedy the situation.

The Harmful (but Often Delicious, or "Impossible to Change") Yins and the Helpful (but Often Time-Consuming and Boring) Yangs

Once the Yangs become understood and implemented as habits, they don't feel too taxing at all.

What's Easier?

- Eating reasonably well, not smoking, and doing moderate exercise consistently,
- **Or**
- None of the above and getting a quadruple bypass.

Yins

Low sugar and acid diet

Good oral hygiene habits brushing and flossing

Managing dry mouth

Managing your general health

Correct use of appropriate dental care products

Evolving your habits to suit your evolving situation

Understanding what additional steps you need to take to balance out the risks.

Understanding that we all have different needs

Yangs

Soft Drink and sugar

Acidic drinks and foods

Not cleaning or not cleaning well enough

Dry mouth caused by a range of factors

General poor health

Not evolving your oral health habits to match your evolving situation

Thinking that the good times can just keep rolling

Starting young, even if you find yourself in a situation where you have already had loads of fillings, missing teeth, and complex dental work, taking the right preventive care steps will help to maximise its longevity.

Plus, having clean, healthy teeth and gums just feels and smells better.

Takeaway Points:

- Once a tooth needs some kind of restorative dental work, it will require further repairs and maintenance – nothing will ever be as good as your natural teeth.
- Data from Australia suggests that over 80% of people's teeth above the age of 75 are decayed, missing, or filled.
- Understand the Yins and Yangs to take the right steps to maximise the longevity of your teeth.
- A damaged or decayed tooth should be the cue to revisit your diet, oral hygiene habits, or dig a bit deeper into your general health for factors that are influencing the situation.

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