

Just About Anything...

TO DELIGHT THE CURIOUS READER

a blog by Mona McHaney

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Brush Up on Your Dental Fingerprints

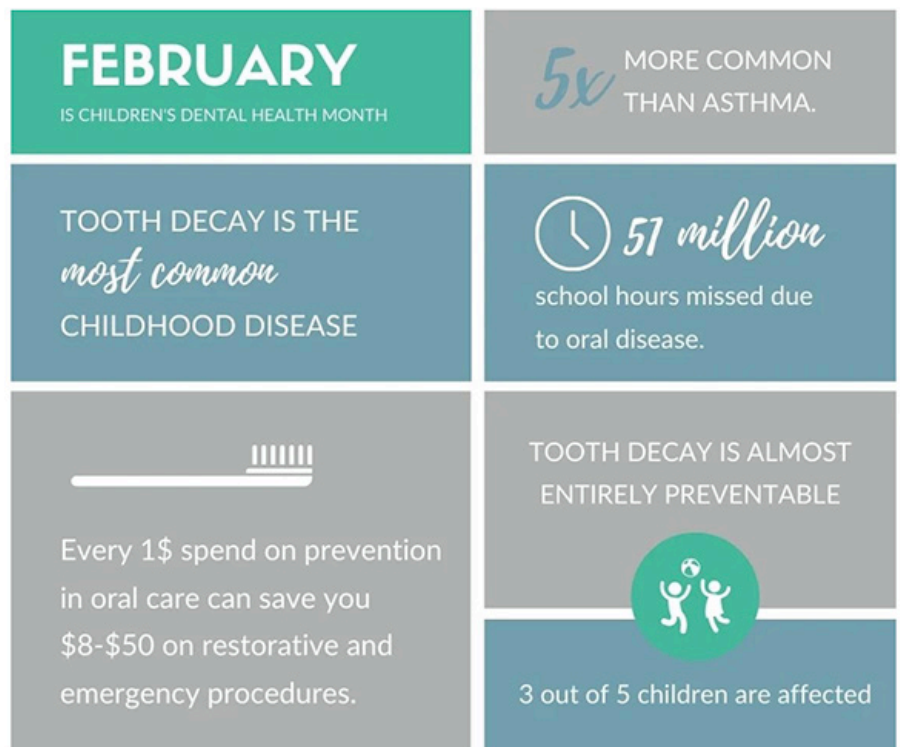
I hated brushing my teeth as a child. It was the one subject upon which my mother and I disagreed, and the one most likely to earn me a spanking.

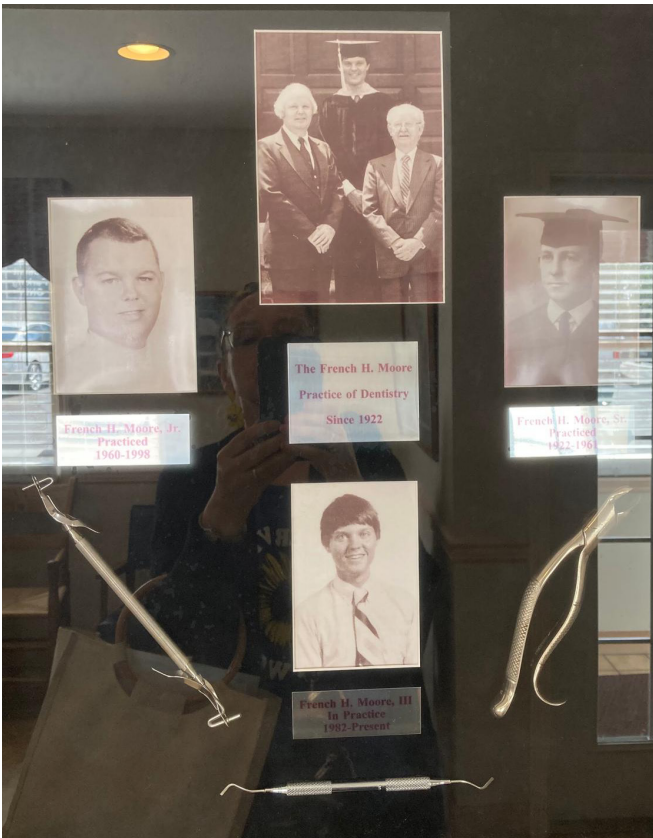
It was only as an adult that I understood why my mom felt so strongly about brushing—apart from the obvious maternal instinct to promote good oral hygiene. My mother had had a traumatic history with her own teeth.

My mom was born into a poor farming family during the Great Depression. She was the seventh of ten children. Her parents had no money for a proper toothbrush or toothpaste, much less dental floss. No, Mom brushed her teeth with a twig, sprinkled on one end with baking soda. Many times my mother recounted how she couldn't sleep at night as a child or concentrate in school because she suffered from a toothache. She had no access to dental care or pain reliever.

By the time Mom reached her early twenties and earned some money working in a sewing factory, she had plenty of cavities. Finally, one of her older sisters took her to see a dentist for the first time in her life. But my mother couldn't afford to have several fillings or caps. Instead, the dentist pulled *all* of her teeth—the healthy ones along with the decayed—and made her a full set of false teeth.

Parents often compensate with their children for things they felt lacking in their own upbringing. Apart from being the brushing disciplinarian in the family, my mom tried to give me very positive experiences in caring for my teeth. When I was a little girl, she took me to the dentist with her and let me sit in her





Mona visits Abingdon Smiles to see her dentist, Dr. French Moore, III. Dr. Moore is the third generation of dentists in his family. Good oral hygiene is often passed down from parent to child.

instruments in bleach and became adept at holding a paper Dixie cup for the patients when they needed to spit.

My chief qualification for this job was that I had a high tolerance for bloody gums and bodily fluids. My husband is a pediatrician, so I received my entire medical education at the dinner table. Every professional journal Mark received in the mail featured a photo of some icky skin disease or intestinal parasite. Sit that next to a bowl of spaghetti and you either lose your appetite or become desensitized.

All this explains how I had the opportunity to observe some of the worst decayed teeth

lap while the dentist looked in her mouth. Mom knew I would feel safe near her, and this was a way to ease me into the dental chair.

When it was time for a check-up of my own, Mom took me to a very patient and kind dentist. He encouraged good behavior by awarding prizes from a large treasure chest. Today such niceties are commonplace; they were less so 50 years ago. Kids have since learned how to spell *cooperation*: T-O-Y.

All this explains why I may be one of the few individuals who actually *enjoys* visits to the dentist. I am not put off by the roar of a drill, the scrape of a dental scaler, or the pinch of biting down on X-rays. Moreover, I absolutely love getting my teeth cleaned! I leave the dental office resolved to preserve my pristine palate and abstain from food and drink the rest of the day. Alas, within a few hours, my growling stomach inevitably triumphs over fresh breath.

My last impediment to achieving oral health excellence was developing the habit of flossing daily. But all that changed the week I joined the Christian Medical and Dental Association's Global Health Outreach in Riobamba, Ecuador. I served in a makeshift dental clinic as the makeshift assistant to a real dentist. In our low-tech setting, I learned how to disinfect



Here are Mona's dental X-rays. An individual's teeth are as distinctive as fingerprints. This is but one example of how God has made each of us unique: He is no cookie-cutter Creator.

in the world. Sadly, the indigenous people whom we served in Ecuador had more dental woes than my poor mother. I returned home to America with a whole new enthusiasm for flossing. Twenty years later, this habit has become so ingrained that I cannot go to sleep at night if I haven't sawed waxed mint between each tooth. Mother can rest easy.

I am thankful to have received excellent dental care throughout my life. I am thankful to have had a mother who enforced brushing. And I am thankful to have received a purple toothbrush at my last check-up.



Dr. Moore's associate, Dr. Smith (right), and his assistant Kristina (left), prepared a new crown for Mona when her old one needed replacing. How fun to take photos from a dental chair!



15 Fun Facts About Teeth

1. No two people have the same set of teeth—not even identical twins. A person's teeth are as unique as his or her fingerprints.
2. Tooth enamel is the hardest substance in the human body.
3. Teeth are the only part of your body that can't heal themselves.
4. Baby teeth usually fall out in the same order in which they came.
5. The human mouth contains more bacteria than there are people on Earth.
6. 90% of systemic diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, have links to oral health.
7. Americans buy more than 14 million gallons (52,995,740 liters) of toothpaste every year.
8. If you don't floss, you miss cleaning 40% of your tooth surfaces.
9. A snail's mouth is no larger than the head of a pin, but it can hold up to 25,000 teeth.
10. It was customary during the Middle Ages to kiss a donkey if you had a toothache.
11. In the 1800s, blacksmiths and barbers also served as dentists.
12. Most Americans did not brush their teeth every day until after World War II. In WW II the military required that soldiers brush their teeth twice a day to keep their teeth healthy. The soldiers brought that habit home after the war.

13. Cheese, especially hard aged cheese like Cheddar, Monterey Jack, and Swiss, help reduce cavity formation in teeth because it neutralizes plaque acid.
14. U.S. and Japanese studies have found that black or green tea has antibacterial power that helps prevent cavities and gum disease.
15. According to "Consumer Reports," dentists are among the five most trusted professionals in the U.S.



Have a delightful day! 

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