

A Good History...

Every year, it seems there are more forms that we have to fill out when going to the doctor. Insurance authorization forms, medical histories, HIPAA forms, emergency contacts...the list goes on and on. I'm sure there was a day when dentists fixed teeth without all the paperwork. Personally, I've never known any different and I would not want to practice in the old days when nobody wore gloves and patients had to "get through it" if the only numbing medicine available didn't take. Nah, I'll stick with computers, improved anesthetics, cosmetic fillings, implants, sedation dentistry, and all the other tools that make what we do a lot kinder to our patients.

In all that paperwork, a good medical history is usually the most important. Different systemic diseases have all kinds of effects on oral health. Knowledge of any disease that you are being treated for helps your dentist determine the best treatment options for you. An accurate list of medications is another key aspect of receiving good oral care. That drug update may take a few minutes, but it can help to save your teeth and even your overall health.

So why does your dentist want to know what drugs you may be taking? The following are a few good examples.

Many people take a variety of medications for a variety of illnesses. Often, certain drugs or combinations of medicines can cause a reduction of salivary flow or xerostomia. This drying of the mouth can cause a lot of cavities in a hurry. If you suffer from dry mouth, regular dental care and check-ups, along with a variety of cavity prevention techniques, are keys to staying cavity free.

There is a commonly prescribed class of drugs called bisphosphonates that help to prevent bone loss. Common brand names of these drugs are Fosamax, Aredia, and Zometa. In the past few years, dentists have started seeing complications following dental surgeries (tooth extractions, gum treatments) that have been linked to these drugs. If you have ever taken these, your dentist needs to know.

It is also important to tell your doctor if you are taking over the counter medications. An aspirin a day is a great way to help prevent heart attacks. It also can lead to excessive bleeding when receiving dental treatment. It's always nice for your dental team to know this in advance so that proper measures can be taken.

The list actually goes on and on. All that paperwork exists for a good reason.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send encouragement to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.