

Worn Out Teeth...

Upon moving to the Hill Country, I was informed that we had the perfect property for a horse. I have always been close to animals, so a horse was not a stretch for me. Unfortunately, my horsemanship experience was zero and I began the long learning process about tack, riding, grooming, feeding, and maintaining our new steed. Fortunately, we've had the help of some great neighhh-bors (couldn't help the pun) who have nursed me along and helped me to become a bit closer to competent.

Being a dentist, horse teeth are very interesting to me. For those of you who do not know (I didn't), horse teeth continue to grow throughout life. In the wild, this is a great trait, but captive horse feed and diets do not always wear at horses' teeth the same way that wild forage does. Therefore, a horse's bite can get out of alignment (similar in ways to some of us) and need rebalancing.

Human teeth can also wear at a faster rate than normal, called dental erosion. Unfortunately, our teeth do not keep growing, so catching erosion early on is very important. It is much easier to prevent the damage than it is to replace worn out teeth later in life. The causes of dental erosion can vary from nighttime grinding (sleep bruxism) to daytime clenching to acid reflux (the acid dissolves the teeth over time). A life of acidic drinks, abrasive toothbrushes and pastes or various other dental traumas can also erode teeth. Preventing all of these causes early in life is key to keeping your teeth whole your whole life.

There are several signs and symptoms that your teeth may be eroding at a faster than normal pace. Cracked tooth edges or transparent tooth tips are a good sign of anterior (front) tooth wear. Visible cracks and discolorations in multiple teeth can indicate grinding and/or clenching. Finally, cupping or rounding of the teeth can be indicators of acid type erosion.

Solutions for eroded teeth can be as simple as smoothing them out and having a dentist fabricate a custom fit night guard. More complicated cases might require braces (orthodontics) to reposition the worn teeth and restore the bite to the proper level. The most severe cases require a complete rebuilding of the teeth to return them to their natural state.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at www.ParrishDental.com.