



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Cavities Not Just Kids' Stuff

OAK BROOK, IL (November 26, 2007) -- Most Americans don't make it into adulthood without at least a few cavities. In fact, tooth decay affects more than 90 percent of adults over the age of 40.¹ What many don't realize is that the threat of cavities is something that you don't ever really leave behind.

"Fillings are more than just an unfortunate souvenir of childhood," said Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. "Changes associated with aging can make cavities a problem for adults of any age."

Receding gums are one of the culprits behind adult cavities. Whether due to gum disease or to overly vigorous tooth brushing, gum tissue can become swollen or damaged and expose the sensitive roots of teeth. Unlike the surfaces of teeth that are typically above the gum line, roots are not protected by hard enamel and are instead covered by a softer material known as cementum. This makes the root surfaces more susceptible to the effects of plaque buildup, which can eventually lead to decay.

When gums recede and expose the roots of teeth, it becomes especially important to maintain proper daily oral hygiene. Brush gently at least twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste, giving special attention to the gumline. Gentle brushing will do the trick and will help preserve gum tissue while reducing discomfort due to sensitive exposed roots. Daily flossing and visits to the dentist for preventive care are other important tools for preserving oral health.

Existing fillings can also contribute to adult cavities. As a filling weakens over time, it tends to fracture and the seal between the filling material and tooth loosens. Bacteria can accumulate in the cracks and crevices, causing acid buildup which promotes decay.

Maintaining fillings is one way to protect teeth from further decay and retain the integrity of restored teeth. Your dentist can check existing fillings for wear and determine if a filling needs to be replaced. In some cases, failed fillings have to be replaced with crowns or can require endodontic treatment involving a root canal or tooth extraction and replacement with a prosthetic tooth.

"Any changes to your oral health, such as increased tooth sensitivity, swollen, painful gums or fillings that feel loose are usually signs that something isn't right," said Dr. Anderson. "Schedule dental exams for

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oral Health: Preventing Cavities, Gum Disease and Tooth Loss.

preventive care, and don't put off additional visits to the dentist if you experience any of these or other changes to your oral health.”

Delta Dental Plans Association (www.deltadental.com) based in Oak Brook, IL, is a national network of independent not-for-profit dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 50 million Americans in more than 88,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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