

The Ranch Report

VOLUME 11 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2017

MAY THE TOOTH BE WITH YOU

As current seniors in McNeil High School representing HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America), we realized that many diseases and disorders were commonly overlooked, inspiring us to promote public awareness on cavities and gum disease. Since it would severely affect all ages at any time in their lives, we have chosen cavities and gum disease as our topics to promote knowledge of. As one of the most commonly overlooked disorders and inflammation, these painful disruptions of everyday life are enormous impacts that require, at times immediate, professional dental assistance.

A common misunderstanding of many adults and children is that cavities occur more frequently in children, because they prefer candy bars, gums, and chewy candies. However, just sweets alone do not cause this throbbing condition; all carbohydrates, such as milk, bread, potato, fruit, and candy create a risk when they are not properly cleaned out of the outside layer of the tooth, called enamel. Saliva and bacteria in mouths then create acids of these food debris, ultimately creating plaque that clings on the teeth; the plaque dwells in the teeth then decays the enamel, and may also start a decay in dentin, or the inner layer, caving holes in teeth that we call cavities.

Gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) is characterized by bleeding and swelling of the gums, usually preceding periodontitis (which is more commonly known as gum

disease). These conditions cause the gums to pull away from the teeth, caused by the buildup of bacteria in plaques of teeth. In result, the gums may pull away from the teeth, exposing the teeth to an excess creation of plaque, ultimately producing a more serious risk and/or condition of cavities.

Gum disease and cavities could be treated by a professional dentist or dental care worker; cavities are drilled and the hole is replaced by a composite resin, while gum disease is usually treated by the attachment of healthy gums to those that are affected. If the gum disease is not at a severe situation, it could be treated by controlling the bacterial growth of it as well. A great way to stay away from gum disease and cavities is brushing your teeth daily and consuming a diet low on carbohydrates. Spread your knowledge about gum disease and cavities so you and your community can stay healthy. May the tooth be with you!

-Yeonseo Jung and Misbah Ali

About Us

Hello, we are seniors in McNeil High School, representing HOSA's (Health Occupations Students of America) Community Awareness team this school year. We hope to raise community awareness on the two frequently overlooked disorders-- cavities and gum disorders, for it could be diagnosed to anyone at anytime! Thank you for reading!



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NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE

Hitting the slopes this ski season?

Keep in mind these tips to preventing injuries on the slopes.

As a former US Olympic Men's Ski Team physician and orthopedist, every year during the winter months I treat many ski & snowboard injuries in Austin recreational athletes of all ages and abilities.

For 15 years, as a traveling doctor for the team, I accompanied the athletes throughout the US, Canada and Europe on the World Cup tour and was responsible for the triage, stabilization, and treatment of injuries in these world-class skiers.

One of the most frequent questions I get this time of year from my patients who ski is

"How can I avoid hurting myself on the ski slopes?"

So what do I tell recreational skiers about staying healthy on the hill?

First and foremost, adjust to the altitude in your first few days. While there are medications that will improve your blood oxygen, they require a prescription and can have side effects. Perhaps the easiest to take along are low-dose aspirin or ginkgo biloba, as both are safe (unless allergic) and easy to take. Low-level exercise and lots of water (especially during the first night) are also key, as is abstinence from alcohol during the first 24 hours at altitude. Early trip moderation equals a better mountain experience!

Modern skis, boots, and bindings are universally safe now, unlike in decades past. Multi-release bindings help you come out of your skis safely in a fall and with less stress on your knees, the most commonly injured joint in a skier. Make sure they are set correctly.

Speaking of knees, in most solid, intermediate skiers, unlike beginners (learning to stop) and racers (ACL injury from shear forces), serious knee injuries are actually quite rare.

The best way to protect yourself from ski injury is:

- **Get in good "ski-shape"**

6 weeks of strength and some aerobic training will suffice

- **Ski within your limits**

- **Stay relaxed, focused & well hydrated**

- **Watch out for that last, fatigued run of the afternoon**
- **If you fall, fall forward and throw your hands in front of you** it's proven that less knee and shoulder injuries occur in the forward lean of a fall.
- **And always, always, wear a helmet!**

Before you ski, take time to take stock of your physical condition, especially your knee, shoulder and hip joints. Pre-trip aches and pains will not make for an enjoyable ski trip!

Written by Kelly Cunningham, MD Orthopedic Specialist and Founder, Austin OrthoBiologics Sports Medicine Clinic

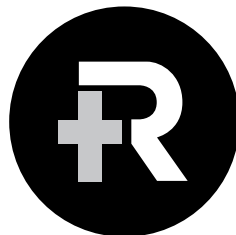
Austin resident Kelly Cunningham, MD is board certified by the American College of Orthopedic Surgeons, and an active member of the Arthroscopy Association of North America and the International Cartilage Repair Society.



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TREE CAVITIES

I took some time to go over the articles of the past couple of years. I have covered many topics that I commonly deal with during consults with clients regarding their trees. This month and next month I will cover three related concerns that I address at just about every appointment: tree cavities/hollows, and next month -fungi that grow on trees and rot that they cause. I hope the next three articles will effectively demonstrate the relationship between them.

It is very common for trees to be hollow to some degree – especially if they are of considerable size and age. In most cases, it is a result of one primary, precipitating event – lightning. Other precipitating events can be wind sheering of large branches, improper pruning of large branches and unhealed deer rubs on trees when they were young.

Regardless of the cause, the present question is: Now that there is a cavity - What is to be done? Some “home remedies” I’ve come across in my years of caring for trees are quite interesting – from filling them with rocks (maybe as much of a way to get rid of the rocks from view as a tree remedy), concrete, filling them with expanding foam, and mechanically removing everything inside the tree possible.

First, it is critical to not do any of the first three in any circumstance! There are many reasons for this, but the principle one is that what will result is more moisture will remain inside the tree for longer, facilitating rot. Rot is by far the worst debilitator of tree health and structural

integrity. As with most cases, Mother nature knows best – air flow is the best way for moisture to dissipate. Removing non-structurally assisting material in the cavity (i.e. organic litter: rotting wood, leaves, sticks, squirrel stashes, etc.) will help by eliminating those objects which will sponge and hold moisture in the hollow longer. Do not try to pry out hard heartwood though by any means. In those cases where a proportional and moderate-sized drill hole can assist with air flow and future water drainage from a cavity, as well as also function as a port for evacuation of organic litter by water-flushing of the cavity (least intrusive, damaging means of cleaning decades of litter out at once I’ve found and employ regularly), in some cases a drilling injury is warranted. To keep out animals from the cavity – a chicken wire mesh with stout fence staples holding it in place will work quite effectively.

The goal of cavity “repair” is to allow the tree a better environment to slow the rot – thereby enabling the tree’s response of wound wood and callus growth, as well as changing the density and location of its new growth in order to compensate for the changes in wind pressure resistance resulting from its cavity.

Questions or comments this article or previous articles have generated, may be directed to me at:

kevin@arborcareandconsulting.com



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TEXAS A&M AgriLIFE FUNGUS GNATS

Fungus gnats often become a problem in homes due to an overwatering problem. Since this time of year can bring poinsettias or other plants into the home, fungus gnats are a pest to watch for.

Fungus gnat adults are small, black, long-legged flies with long antennae. Most adults are about 1/16 an inch but some can get up to 1/2 an inch. They are weak fliers and generally remain near potted plants, growing media, foliage or leaf litter.

Larvae, or immatures, have a black head capsule and long whitish body without legs. They feed on organic matter such as mulch, compost, grass clippings, plant roots and fungi. When conditions are very moist, fungus gnat larvae can become abundant and may leave slime trails on media that looks similar to trails left by snails or slugs.

While these gnats are a nuisance they are fairly easy to manage.

Indoors, it is a good idea to use yellow sticky cards as a monitoring tool. Potato pieces may also be used as a monitoring tool for fungus gnats. To do this, imbed a peeled potato cube into media and inspect the underside of the potato and the media directly below it twice a week for fungus gnat larvae.

To manage fungus gnat populations, work on reducing excessively moist conditions. Avoid overwatering and make sure that there is good drainage. The surface of container soil should be allowed to dry before watering again.

If using compost, make sure that items have been fully composted. Compost piles should be turned regularly and kept away from doors or windows. Inspect all doors, windows, vents and screens for a good seal to reduce the number of gnats that may enter a structure.

Bacillus thuringiensis var. *israelensis* or the nematode *Steinernema feltiae* can be applied in containers to control larvae. Either spray on the media or apply as a soil drench. Biologicals work best when they are applied early in an infestation. If a population is already large, they may not provide the control desired.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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WINTER TIPS

Preparedness is paramount when it comes to road trips year-round, and hitting the road for a long drive during winter months is no exception. With an increased risk of potential driving hazards like sleet, snow, strong winds and frigid temperatures, it's a good idea to think about ways to ensure you'll travel safely.

Consider the following tips when preparing for your winter road trip:

- Invest in an emergency kit for your vehicle. Available at most major retailers, these kits are relatively inexpensive and contain items like flares, booster cables, flashlights, ponchos and first aid supplies for minor injuries.
- Develop a contingency plan. Create a strategy for dealing with a flat tire, vehicle accident, dead battery or other potential travel delays. Keep a hard-copy list of people or businesses to contact for help should you need it.
- Stay in touch. Check in with a designated contact during your journey with updates on your location, delays encountered or

unexpected situations that require longer travel time. When driving, remember always to pull off the road before using your cell phone.

- Check the local weather report before heading out. Winter weather can be tricky and forecasts aren't always accurate. You can double check your destination's weather history on a variety of websites to determine typical conditions to expect in that area during your travels.
- Store warm clothes and blankets in your vehicle. Be prepared to stay warm if you're stuck for extended periods by keeping a blanket or two in your car. Also, pack a small travel case with snow boots, socks, gloves, a scarf, hat and heavy sweater in case you need to leave your vehicle.
- Review your travel route without GPS. Read through detailed driving directions, including alternate routes, so you know your options. Also consider keeping a map handy in case your navigation system is compromised during your trip.

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IT'S ANOTHER NEW YEAR...

"Happy New Year!" That greeting will be said and heard for at least the first couple of weeks as a new year gets under way. But the day celebrated as New Year's Day in modern America was not always January 1.

ANCIENT NEW YEARS: The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring). The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical nor agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary. The Babylonian new year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison. The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun. In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

THE CHURCH'S VIEW OF NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS: Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the new year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and New Year's Day was no different. New Years is still observed as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision by some denominations. During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

NEWYEAR TRADITIONS: Other traditions of the season include the making of New Year's resolutions. That tradition also dates back to the early Babylonians. Popular modern resolutions might include the promise to lose weight or quit smoking. The early Babylonian's most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment. The tradition of using a baby to signify the new year was begun in Greece around 600 BC. It was their tradition at that time to celebrate their god of wine, Dionysus, by parading a baby in a basket, representing the annual rebirth of that god as the spirit of fertility. Early Egyptians also used a baby as a symbol of rebirth.

AULD LANG SYNE: The song, "Auld Lang Syne," is sung at the stroke of midnight in almost every English-speaking country in the world to bring in the new year. At least partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700's, it was first published in 1796 after Burns' death. Early variations of the song were sung prior to 1700 and inspired Burns to produce the modern rendition. An old Scotch tune, "Auld Lang Syne" literally means "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days."

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NATUREWATCH The Preserves Around Us

by Jim and Lynne Weber

One of the main reasons Austin is such a wonderful place to live is because it is interlaced with a patchwork of preserves, which together comprise the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) System. In 1992, voters in the City of Austin passed Proposition 10, approving \$22M in bonds for the sole purpose of acquiring and improving lands to protect air and water quality, conserve endangered species, and provide open space for passive public use. Jointly owned and managed by the City of Austin, Travis County, the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Nature Conservancy, the Travis Audubon Society, and private landowners, the BCP's ultimate goal is to set aside 30,428 acres that contribute to the quality of all life here in Austin.

A multi-agency conservation effort that operates under a regional permit issued under the Endangered Species Act by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the BCP consists of several tracts of land in western Travis County. It is important to note that a 'preserve' is different than a 'park', and is set aside for the purpose of maintaining a natural state rather than developed for recreational use. The BCP protects prime habitat for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler, a bird species that is found only to breed within Central Texas' specialized mix of native, mature Ashe Juniper (often incorrectly called 'cedar') and stands of Live, Spanish, and Shin oak trees. This type of mixed oak-juniper woodland grows mainly on



The endangered Black-capped Vireo.

their entire existence underground in karst formations. These karst features, such as caves, sinkholes, cracks, and crevices, were formed by the dissolution of calcium carbonate in limestone bedrock by mildly acidic groundwater. Over 70 other rare plant and animal species also exist on the preserves, making this region one of the most biologically diverse areas in the country. As such, Central Texas is happily home to more habitat conservation plans than any other region in the United States.

These wild and beautiful areas require management plans in order for them to remain pristine habitats. This includes establishment of secure boundaries and rules for access control, maintenance of appropriate trails, species monitoring, habitat enhancement, and – last but not least – public education and outreach to promote good neighbor relations. As Austin residents, we can do our part to become stewards of these unique habitats. While in the preserve system, we can stay on marked trails, travel only on foot, and “take only photographs, leave only footprints.” In our neighborhoods, especially those that border preserve tracts, we can landscape with native plants, remove invasive plants, eliminate pesticide use, be responsible pet owners, practice water conservation, and always respect preserve boundaries.

Most importantly, we can all minimize further negative impacts on the fragile habitat that surrounds our neighborhoods by caring for the preserves through volunteering. Some of the activities you can become involved with in the preserve system include long-term habitat restoration, gathering and planting native seeds, removing non-native invasive plants, leading guided hikes, and learning about and sharing your knowledge of the native plants and animals that make this such a special place to live. For more information, visit the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve website at: www.austintexas.gov/bcp.

Send your nature-related questions to: naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our two books, *Nature Watch Austin* & *Nature Watch Big Bend*, both published by Texas A&M University Press, and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.



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