

Nutritionally Speaking

Causes of sick gums

by George Meinig, D.D.S.

Dear Dr. Meinig: My dentist told me I have pyorrhea. Will taking Vitamin C stop it? C.H.

Dear C.H.: Like the majority of diseases, Pyorrhea has several causes that work together to create degenerative tissue breakdown. Lack of Vitamin C is just one of the causes of sick gums.

More important is your balance of minerals. There has been so much emphasis placed on vitamins in recent years that most people forget our need of minerals is often more vital.

Almost everyone seems to feel calcium is essential in the matter of tooth decay, but few see the importance of calcium in the eating away of the jawbone that supports their teeth. Incidentally pyorrhea is sometimes called arthritis of the teeth.

This gum disease is primarily an imbalance of calcium and phosphorus and can be as simple as too little calcium dietary intake. Before you rush out and buy calcium you should know it is the ratio of calcium to phosphorus that is important. The imbalance of these two elements can result from calcium being too low and phosphorus too high, or from too high calcium and too low phosphorus, or low calcium and low phosphorus or high calcium and high phosphorus.

All of these imbalances can exist from one's dietary food selections but can also exist for a number of other reasons. Sugar, caffeine products, alcohol and a variety of drugs all upset the normal ideal ratios of calcium and phosphorus. Though your defense mechanisms do their best to keep the balance within normal ranges, continued indis-



Dr. George Meinig, D.D.S.

cretions eventually play their toll. Obviously if you do not eat sufficient calcium you will have to draw the calcium you need from your teeth and bones. If continued long enough softening of bones will result. Usually the higher stress areas such as the bone that surround teeth, discs in the spine, wrists, fingers, ankles, hips are the ones that break down.

While periodontal disease (pyorrhea) is more prevalent as one gets older, it is now frequently seen in children. It's kissin' cousin, arthritis, has related body chemistry and is also an increasing problem in youngsters.

While calcium and phosphorus seem paramount, other minerals are also essential. The hair analysis studies we do today will often reveal low manganese and zinc and at times

high lead or mercury levels. Actually we test some 15 to 20 elements in the hair as optimum nutrition demands disclosure of any and all problem areas.

This is not meant to discourage your use of Vitamin C for your gum troubles but to broaden your desire for a good balance nutrition program. Pyorrhea and tooth decay can be and is being stopped today by good nutritive habits.

Dear Doctor: I wish you dentists would quit pestering us about eating candy and sweets. You are taking all the joy out of life. R.M.

Dear R.M.: I hope sweets don't represent the only joy in your life....if so you don't need me, you need a psychiatrist.

Your question, however, has evidently struck a note around the country as some dentists have decided to take your hint and reverse the strategy. Instead of preaching against the use of sugar foods, as you are complaining we do, some dentists are now using bumper stickers on their cars that state: "Eat Candy, Support Your Local Dentist".

Dear Dr. Meinig: Last week's mail brought an envelope from the Nestle Company containing cream of chicken flavor soup. The label listed 29 ingredients, 16 of these seem to be chemicals, and it included sugar and corn syrup. Should I use it? B.L.

Dear B.L.: I received it also and I'm making a lecture slide picture of its contents to illustrate how preposterous some of our imitation foods have gotten to be. This so-called food would be better labeled "cream of chemical soup".

Everyone has a question about nutrition. Send yours to: Dr. Geo. E. Meinig, c/o OVN, Box 277, Ojai, CA 93023.