Holistic Dentistry Basics

Are you interested in holistic dentistry? But you've just found out that there's a whole new language associated with it. You don't know what the words mean.

You don't know what people are talking about. Well, here is a primer for you. Let's jump into what do all of these words mean that relate to holistic dentistry.

You know, at the end of the day, it's all about making sure that we're addressing root cause of symptoms, not just band-aiding and patching up the symptoms that you have.

also really thinking about how does what's going on here affect you? So let's get into these terms and make it a little easier for you. Biocompatibility.

What does that even mean? Well, if you think about the little pieces of that word bio or body or life and compatible. So you want things that are compatible with life and your body's ability to work well.

Now, you might think that every single material in dentistry should qualify for that, but I'm going to tell you that that's not true.

Biocompatibility and Mercury-Free Care

There are things like mercury and dental fillings that are simply not biocompatible with your body. So in holistic dentistry, we focus on this, making sure that everything we use is the best to make sure your body is going to continue functioning as it should, and you're going to be healthy because of the treatment, not sick because of the treatment.

Now you might hear people that say they're amalgam-free or amalgam-safe. I like to say mercury-free or mercury-safe. What's the difference with this? A lot of dentists nowadays aren't actually placing mercury or amalgam or silver fillings.

You might've heard them most frequently as silver fillings. They're not actually placing those kinds of fillings anymore. Some are, it's still allowed in the United States and it's still happening every single day.

But a lot of dentists are saying we don't want to do that anymore. So they are mercury or amalgam free, silver filling free. That's different than safe.

In our office, we use a whole host of precautions to make sure that when those fillings are drilled out, whether you call them silver fillings or amalgam fillings, they're 50% mercury.

We are very careful to make sure you're not going to get more mercury into your system after that and get sick because of it. So this is silver filling safe or amalgam filling safe, whatever you want to call it because not only are we not placing these kinds of silver fillings, but we're removing them in a way that doesn't lead to potential future health problems.

What is ozone therapy? You may have heard that this is something that you want to look for when looking for a holistic dentist.

Ozone Therapy and Biologic Gum Treatment

Well, ozone is simply three molecules of oxygen, and ozone or oxygen doesn't like to be in threes. It likes to be in

pairs. Remember, we hear it as O2.

That means two, not three. That third goes to look for something to grab onto. What does it grab onto? It loves to grab onto bacteria, viruses, fungus, all those kinds of things.

So inside of dentistry, we use it to clean your mouth. We use it when we're doing tooth cleanings. We use it underneath fillings to make sure there's no more bacteria underneath there that could lead to future decay.

We use it after removing a tooth to make sure that that area is free of infection. We use it to disinfect teeth. We use it to make them so they're not as sensitive.

We use it in the sinuses. We use it so many different places. So this is something you absolutely want to find an office that can do because it helps to really make that dental treatment that you're getting done safer for you and free of all the bugs that are in the mouth.

What does biologic periodontal therapy mean? Well, what this really means is that when we're talking about gum disease, we're saying, what's really happening in the whole body in relation to that gum disease?

Is this leading to diabetes complications? Is this potentially leading to heart problems? Is this leading to pregnancy complications or kidney issues or lung issues?

We're looking at all of that and saying, we don't want to just make sure that the gums are healthy. We want to make sure that all of you is healthy. So we have protocol that works with your body to increase health everywhere.

We shy away from things like antibiotics. Why? because we feel like that could potentially lead to other gut issues. We don't want to make things worse than making things better.

So we work with natural antimicrobials to help your gums get healthy so that your body can be healthy. You've probably heard a lot of talk about fluoride.

What does it mean to be a fluoride-free dental office?

Fluoride-Free Dentistry and Hydroxyapatite

Well, you might think it's just about the fluoride that we put on your teeth after a tooth cleaning, but that's actually not the only place that fluoride exists in dental care.

Fluoride is also found in our filling material. It's found in our sealant material. It's found in our cement. It's found in a lot of different places.

So here at our office, we ensure that all of the materials we are using are free of fluoride. So make sure that you're really asking your office, are you fluoride free?

Not just recommending fluoride alternatives, but actually fluoride free when doing treatment. So that's something that not everybody knows. And what are some of those fluoride alternatives?

Well, hydroxyapatite is the best one that we have found. I believe the best one that exists. What is it? Hydroxyapatite is simply the mineral that your teeth are made of.

So when you're starting to get a cavity, what that usually is from is either your body needs the minerals or acid in your mouth is pulling the minerals out, leaving a hole.

bacteria crawl in the hole, this leads to a cavity. So instead of putting something like fluoride on the tooth that was never there, we just replace it with the mineral that was lost.

That mineral that your body took or that the acid dissolved, that's what we put back. That's the hydroxyapatite. So thankfully you could use that at home.

You can use that in your treatments there. We also use it here in the dental office in place of any fluoride treatment that you're going to get. Hydroxyapatite is the thing you want, not fluoride.

Lots of people ask about oil pulling. Is this something that is it effective? Does it work? Is it something I should be using on a daily basis? So let's talk a little bit about the background.

Oil Pulling and the Oral Microbiome

Oil pulling is from India from hundreds if not thousands of years ago and what they discovered probably not because they knew the science but because they saw it worked that bacteria will attract to the oil.

So when you are swishing it around in your mouth you're literally pulling bacteria and other things from nooks and crannies in the mouth. So if you have active gum disease this is fabulous to do.

Make sure you're spitting it in a tissue because it's full of bugs. Get rid of it that way. But if you have a healthy mouth and you don't have gum disease, oil pulling may actually do some harm because you're pulling good bacteria out as well.

So if you have a healthy mouth, I recommend it only about every three or four days just to kind of maintain the balance in the mouth. But if you have active disease, absolutely, this is a great thing to do along with treatment until you get healthy.

What is the oral microbiome? You've probably heard of gut microbiome. Basically, it's the bacteria that live in your gut. Well, there's a whole bunch of bacteria that live in your mouth as well.

And they're really important. I mean, think about the things that come in through the mouth. Food, air, water. could be full of all sorts of things that we don't want to get into the body.

So it's important that we have bacteria here that help to keep us well. This is why we don't do things like oil pulling every single day because we want them to stay well.

It's also another reason we don't use alcohol containing mouthwashes. We don't want to kill everything in sight. and why there's some concern about things like essential oils.

Are we killing everything? This is why we are very careful to use very minimal amounts of these things, just enough to help keep things well, but not to tip the balance in favor of the bad bacteria.

So you have to be careful with the products you're using that they're supporting the microbiome in your mouth, the good bugs, and not killing off all bugs because then the bad bugs flourish.

So it's important to know that it's here to support it, not to eradicate it.

Lasers, Myofunctional Therapy, and Airway Dentistry

Lasers have been around in dentistry for a long time, as long as I've been a dentist, and they are used for multiple different reasons. They can be used to trim gum tissue.

They can be used to disinfect gum tissue. They can actually be used to cut a tooth instead of using a hand piece or a drill to drill on your tooth. They can be used to shrink up tissue.

We use a laser frequently when we're treating sleep apnea. We use it to shrink up tissue so you can breathe better. They can be used to cut tongue ties and lip ties.

They can be used to disinfect areas after surgery or after a cleaning. Lasers can be used for a lot of different things and there's not just one kind of laser.

There's a whole bunch of different spectrums of wavelengths that are used. And really the wavelength determines how it's to be used. Some lasers are great for gum tissue.

Some lasers are great for bone and tooth tissue. So not every laser does all of the above. But in a holistic dental office, they figured out a way to make treatment less invasive, less potentially painful by using these laser frequencies in different ways.

So it's a great thing to ask about. What is myofunctional therapy? You know, this is something that I recommend to nearly every single person that struggles with sleep apnea.

Why? Because sleep apnea is obstruction of the tube that you breathe through. It might be obstruction from literally there's just not enough space because there's not enough room in your mouth, but often it's obstruction because of the tissues in the mouth.

We're talking about the tongue. and the uvula and the soft palate, all of those tissues falling back or situated back because of tongue ties and other problems.

So myofunctional therapy is a series of exercises that we train you through that teach you how to get your tongue up and forward and out of the airway, how to get it functioning better.

Do we need to clip the tongue tie? We assess that along with myofunctional therapy. So crucial as you're going through sleep apnea treatment. What does airway center dentistry mean?

What that means is we're looking at you and we're saying, yes, you have teeth. Yes, you have gums. Yes, you have bones, but you also breathe. And all of these structures are located in the same area.

So our infections in the mouth contributing to swelling that's leading to sleep apnea. are things like an orthodontist previously taking teeth out and shrinking your mouth down, leading to obstruction or blocking and you're not getting enough air.

All of these things are really tied together. So we can look at your tongue and say, ah, you're not getting good sleep, are you? We can see extra bumps of bone underneath your tongue and say, oh, you're struggling with sleep, aren't you?

So we're looking in your mouth. We're looking at all the structures we always look at. We're looking at teeth. We're looking at all of these things and saying, how do they tie to your airway and you breathing and really feeling your best.

Nutrition and Root Canal Alternatives

So this is looking outside of the teeth at really your body and you and how it all integrates together. nutrition and dentistry do they go together well at a holistic dental practice hopefully you're going to hear a lot of talk about nutrition and it's not just the typical you shouldn't eat sugar because it gives you cavities tuck it's is your gut absorbing nutrients properly is that why you're always getting cavities even though you're taking a good you know good care of your teeth it's Oh, you've lost a tooth here.

You need more vitamin D, more vitamin K. You need more of all of that because that's what ensures mineral absorption and mineral deposition into this jawbone.

So nutrition is an essential piece of dentistry and dental health and overall health. It has to be talked about in a whole conversation together to really make sure that you're taking care of everything that you need to take care of to be well.

Root canal alternatives. Now this is something that I talk about all the time, but really we come to a fork in the road. It's either we keep a tooth alive if it has not died yet, or we replace a tooth if it already has died.

So what are alternatives to root canals? It's that fork. Is the tooth still alive or not? If you still have sensitivity to hot and cold, those kinds of things, it always makes me a little happy because it means the tooth's still alive.

So make sure the dentist assesses, is this tooth still alive? And if it is, we work really hard to save it. We use ozone to kill any bacteria on the deepest part of the cavity.

We fill right over top of that and then we give your body everything it needs. Lots of minerals, lots of vitamins to be able to heal itself. So that's the alternative if the tooth is still alive.

Let's keep it alive if possible. if the tooth is already dead or it's dying, so if it hurts to bite on, if you have swelling, anything like that, or if you already have a root canal.

Unfortunately, once a tooth is already dead, there's no way to revive it right now. We hope someday this might happen, but at the moment, no.

Ceramic Dental Implants and Closing Thoughts

So in that situation, you either look at a root canal, which we don't do here in our office because we see so many fail, or we remove the tooth, and replace it with a ceramic dental implant, which a lot of our patients are choosing to do because they don't want the risk of that root canal being infected and leading to other health issues down the road.

What are ceramic dental implants? You know, you may hear the term zirconia and I'll tell you that's the exact same thing. I like to call it ceramic because people can kind of get an idea what that means, but the real material is called zirconia.

So zirconia oxide. And what it is is a material that is white, looks like a tooth, the bone grows to it, the gums love it, and it can function just like you never lost your tooth.

We do prefer them over titanium for a lot of reasons. However, titanium have been successful for, you know, decades now. So titanium isn't a poor choice, but I believe that ceramic offers better options, especially in the long run and for your overall health than titanium.

Hopefully this has helped. You know, why is it important to understand some of these things? Well, as you've probably learned, holistic dentistry is all about root cause treatment.

Really saying, okay, what could be going on in my body that's showing up here or vice versa? What could be going on here that's affecting my body? So you being able to have informed discussions with your dentist really helps you to be able to get the result that you're looking for.

Holistic dentistry, or like I like to call it, health-based dentistry, is all about getting to root cause and making sure that everything that's going on in your mouth is in sync with everything that's going on with the rest of your body as well.

Because if you've never noticed, you're actually connected head to toe. So let's make sure that we're considering all of this when we're talking about you and how to get you really well.