

SUN TIMES

THE EVOLUTION OF DENTISTRY PART 2: HYGIENE

Tao Sun DDS
13692 Apple Valley Rd.
Suite #150
Apple Valley, CA 92308

760-810-7297 phone
760-810-7299 fax
taosundds@gmail.com
taosundds.com

Tues. 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
Fri. 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
Select Thursdays &
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Dentistry has come a long way since the days of knocking out a rotten tooth with a rock. As humankind's knowledge of dental care advances with each passing day, patient care gets more effective, accessible, comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. This month, we'll get the nitty gritty on dental hygiene as part two in a series.

Ever since the days of cavemen gnawing on raw meat, humans have needed to clean their teeth.

This need has only grown as we consume more sugar, which leads to more decay than our ancestors.

Personal teeth cleaning procedures were recorded as far back as 3000 BC in Assyria (modern day Iraq).

Early toothbrushes/picks throughout the world were made from sticks, feathers, bones, porcupine quills, hog's hair attached to bamboo, and more.

In 1789, William Addis invented the modern day toothbrush by gluing boar's hairs into bone. His company, Wisdom Toothbrushes, was also the first to mass produce toothbrushes, and is still in business today.

The most common toothbrush now has a plastic handle and nylon bristles, which were introduced in 1938 by DuPont. Many also have rubber segments designed to provide a more effective cleaning.

Electric toothbrushes, which trace back to 1954 in Switzerland, are

also popular, and now include such features as Bluetooth compatibility and color changing lights.

Toothpaste is an important complement to toothbrushes, and records of it date back to 355 BC, when Greece's Hippocra-

credited for its invention in 1815. The Codman and Shurtleff Company began marketing silk floss in 1882.

Nylon became the default material for floss starting in the 1940s. Today, there's a variety of different types of floss, including wa-

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tes recommended using powder to clean teeth. Later, 4th century Egyptians wrote of a toothpaste recipe of salt, pepper, mint and iris flower.

Other toothpaste ingredients recorded through history include charcoal, soap, honey, ashes, crushed bone and shells, and even urine.

Colgate was the first company to sell toothpaste in large numbers, in jars, and the 1890s advent of the metal tube made toothpaste even more accessible to the masses.

Floss, another important component of modern day dental hygiene, was slower to gain popularity. A New Orleans dentist is

ter flossers, floss picks and threaders to make the task easier (and give you less of an excuse not to do it!)

Knowledge of dental health has also grown a lot over time, along with all knowledge.

Around year 1000, an Arabian surgeon named Al-bucasis wrote about the formation of tartar. In 1882, Willoughby D. Miller concluded microorganisms cause tooth decay.

In 1903, Thaddeus P. Hyatt was the first to encourage dentists to practice preventative dentistry, and not just reparative dentistry. Today, all general dentists practice prophylaxis - the prevention of disease - by doing

routine cleanings.

Their toolset has evolved over time, too, from simple scrapers to precisely shaped metal "scalers" used today, and electronic machines with ultrasonic vibrating tips to break up hard deposits.

Education about the importance of good dental hygiene has grown, too, especially with the introduction of the internet.

The evolution of dental hygiene tools and knowledge all adds up to healthier smiles and healthier lives.

Tao Sun DDS provides cleaning and deep cleaning services. Call us at (760) 810-7297 for more info and to make an appointment.