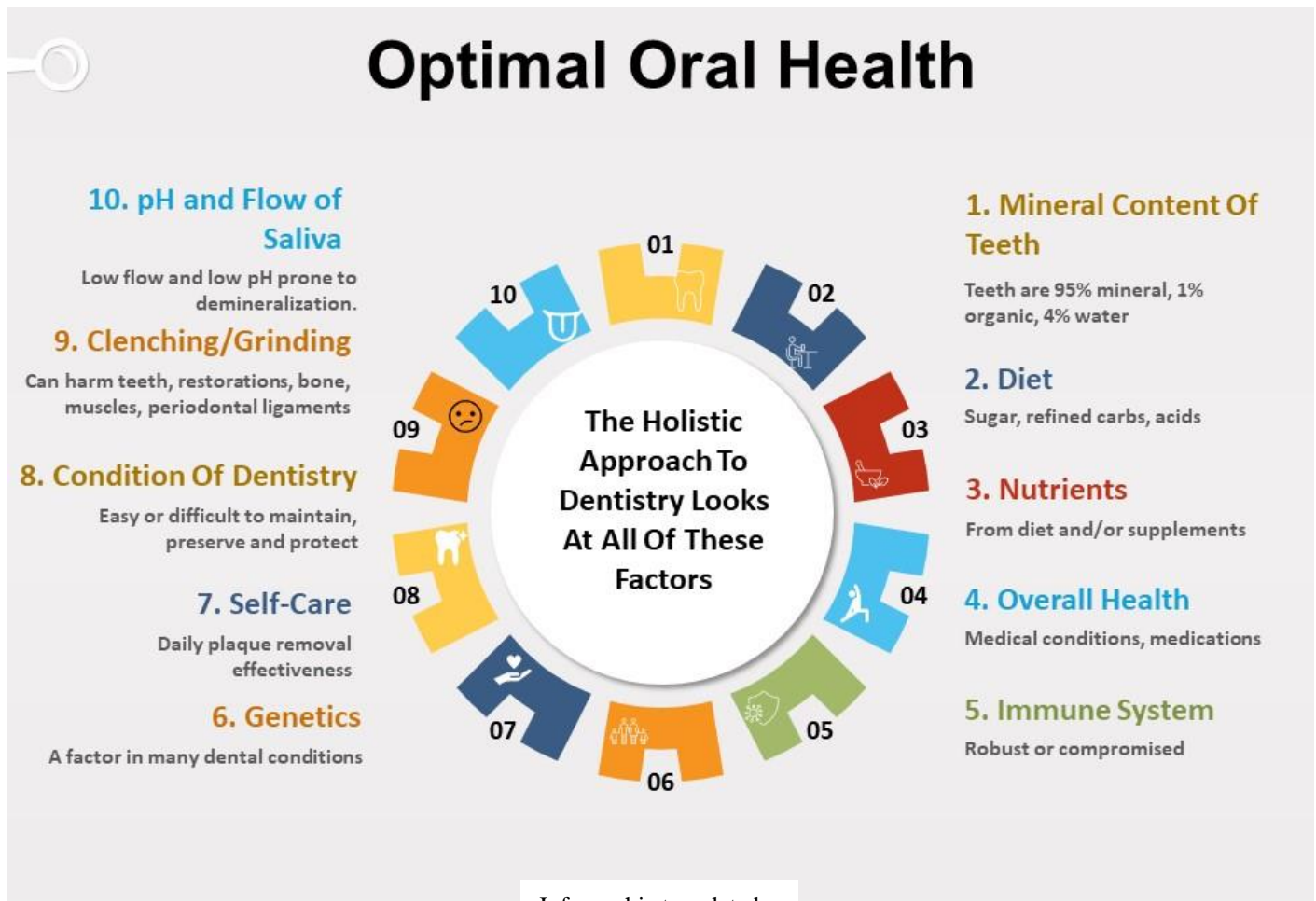


Greg Tarantola DDS

Components Of The Holistic Approach To Dentistry



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Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “Holistic” as relating to or concerned with the whole or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of, treatment of, or dissection into just the parts. The above infographic illustrates the components Dr. T. looks at in developing a diagnosis and treatment plan for each patient. Mainstream dentistry looks at a dental condition – say “a cavity” – and then says it needs a filling, crown, etc. The holistic approach requires time and an in-depth, non-rushed conversation with the patient. Many offices today just don’t have time for this. It is more about getting as many procedures as possible done as quickly as possible. Let’s look at each factor more in-depth.

1. Mineral content of teeth – If the mineral content goes much below 95%, teeth begin to demineralize characterized by white spots, dark spots, duller appearance. That's why remineralizing toothpastes and rinses are so important. Root surfaces (cementum) are exposed when there is gum recession and have much less mineral content – 45-50%. Dentin, the tooth structure beneath the enamel and cementum layers, is 70% mineralized. Dentin can be exposed if the enamel and cementum are worn or abraded away. That's why with exposed cementum and dentin, remineralization is even more important. And that's also why restorations on root surfaces – from root surface cavities – have such a poor prognosis. Quality photographs are very important as they provide an excellent baseline to assess mineralization. X-rays do not show this. A dull appearance and/or discolorations on the surfaces suggest demineralization future clinical exams can be compared to these photographs to evaluate improvement.
2. Diet – bacteria live in plaque and biofilm on your teeth and take the sugars and refined carbohydrates we eat and metabolize them with acid as a byproduct. This acid causes cavities. That's why we should limit sugar and refined carbs. If you do eat sweets – we all do! – don't brush right after. That rubs the acid into the teeth accelerating the demineralization. Just rinse afterward with water – or better yet Spry xylitol rinse – and brush later on. Remember fruits have sugars also and citrus fruits have citric acid as well as sugars. Carbonated beverages and sports drinks demineralize also.
3. Nutrients from diet, toothpaste, and/or supplements – It has been shown decades ago that the nutrients we consume enter the blood supply of the tooth pulp in 1 hour! Remember that teeth are living structures. Calcium-rich foods and supplements with hydroxyapatite and calcium carbonate absorb into the tooth surface and also enter the pulp cells via the blood supply. Vitamin K2 has been shown to prevent and even reverse early cavities. Animal organ meats are high in K2. K2 supplements and beef organ supplements – which provide K2 - are also quite effective.
4. Overall health – There are medical conditions that can contribute to demineralization and tooth decay so the dentist needs to be aware and take that into consideration. These medical conditions include Acid Reflux. Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a common condition in which stomach acids travel up the esophagus, Diabetes, Thyroid Disorders, Eating Disorders, Hormonal Changes, Menopause, Pregnancy, Teeth Grinding (Bruxism), Dry Mouth (Xerostomia), Sensitivities to materials/chemicals. Gum disease can be related to cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis.

These conditions often require consultation with an Integrative Medicine/Functional Medicine physician. And bad teeth can be a factor in various medical issues. See the tooth meridian chart [HERE](#)

5. Immune system status - The immune system is a complex network of organs, cells, and proteins that defend the body against infection and environmental toxins while protecting the body's own cells. The immune system keeps a record of every germ (microbe) it has ever defeated so it can recognize and destroy the microbe quickly if it enters the body again. Abnormalities of the immune system can lead to allergic diseases, immunodeficiencies and autoimmune disorders. This may explain why someone with an infected tooth has no symptoms – it may be due to a strong immune system. And someone else has terrible symptoms – may be due to a weak immune system. This is especially important when removing silver/mercury. Immune system deficiencies can also be a reason for material sensitivities. If dentistry is planned, choosing the right materials – those most compatible with that patient's immune system – is aided by Dental Materials Reactivity Testing done by <https://www.elisaact.com/dental-orthopedic-reactivity-testing/>
6. Genetics – cavities, gum disease, alignment of teeth, missing teeth, and malformation of teeth can be related to genetics. A very common thing we see is gum recession. It is not necessarily a disease but rather a condition. Many patients believe it is an age-related condition. My observation through the years says it is not primarily related to age. I have seen 20-year-olds with terrible recession and 80-year-olds with no recession. I feel genetics is a major factor. You can't control genetics obviously but it is good to know. You can control how you manage it.
7. Self-care – How effective is one's daily protocol at removing bacteria, plaque, and biofilm from all teeth surfaces and from gum pockets if there are deeper ones present? Diet, nutrition, and supplementation are very important but that does not diminish the need for effective self-care. There are many devices available – they can be seen on the website – that work well for your status of teeth, gums, dentistry done, recession, exposed roots, etc. Our hygienist coaches the patients in what works best for their mouth and teeth. For example, Tom's floss is broad and flat whereas Better n' Better floss is multiple thin strands. To test your effectiveness, use a plaque-disclosing tablet. If there are areas missed, the plaque will be stained so you can go back and enhance your technique's effectiveness. See plaque-disclosing tablets [HERE](#).

8. Condition of dentistry – are all aspects of the dentistry that has been done designed in a way that it is easy to remove food, plaque, etc.? This can be gaps around fillings, restorations that don't contact adjacent teeth correctly, crowns that have gaps between the edge of the crown and the tooth, etc. If so, can the oral self-care protocol be modified to help? We are not quick to recommend changing dentistry, especially crowns, as it is more trauma to the living pulp, Back to the important question - is it causing a problem or is it just an observation? If it is causing a problem – cavities forming, sensitivity, gum inflammation, etc., the dentistry may need to be changed. If it is just an observation, it can be actively monitored over time with photos and X-rays.
9. Clenching and/or grinding – Normal chewing force is about 70 pounds per square inch. Sleep studies have shown that clenching/grinding while sleeping can generate up to 250 pounds per square inch! This can damage teeth, dental restorations, the bone around teeth, the jaw joints (TMJs), and the jaw muscles. A clenching/grinding habit needs to be taken into consideration when planning dentistry – the design may need to be modified to minimize damage. It is a habit, often genetically related, but habits can be changed. It is about getting the right message to the subconscious mind both during the day and at night. See the information on the website “Do You Clench Or Grind Your Teeth”.
10. pH and flow of saliva – proper salivary flow is important for the ongoing remineralization process. Low salivary flow can inhibit proper natural remineralization. Low salivary flow can be due to medications, medical conditions, head and neck radiation treatments, and genetics. [Oil pulling](#) can be an effective way to manage dry mouth. The pH of saliva is 6.7 on average. A more acidic saliva can accelerate sensitivity, demineralization and cavity formation. If you would like to find the pH of your saliva, you can use pH test strips. If it is acidic, Carifree has a toothpaste that can help raise pH. These products can be found on the site [HERE](#)