

DDS DENTAL NEWS

IN MEMORY

This issue of DDS Dental News is dedicated to Dr. Felix (Phil) Wagher (February 10, 1961 to September 14, 2017). Dr. Wagher was instrumental in the creation and design of the STS Dental Clinic. His dedication to the dental profession, to the people with whom he worked and to the individuals for whom he provided dental care will never be forgotten.

Special Olympics Winter Games 2019

The winter games were held on Feb 23, 2019. The participants actually had snow because of some very dedi-



cated volunteers who spent numerous weeks making snow. This ensured that the athletes could participate in their events. We were also able to educate the athletes about the importance of dental health and proper oral hygiene. The dental hygiene students from Tunxis Community College and their instructor joined the Special Olympics Healthy Smiles Program. I am not sure who had more fun, the athletes or the students. It was a wonderful morning for all!



Tunxis Dental Hygiene Students, DDS and Special Olympics Staff

Dysphagia, Food Thickeners and Oral Health

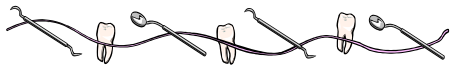
As we get older, we begin to experience unexpected medical issues. One of the ailments that is not often discussed is Dysphagia or difficulty swallowing. According to the Washington Post, an estimated 9 million Americans have some form of Dysphagia and this ailment plays havoc on daily life. In order to make swallowing safer, many physicians encourage their patients to make their drinks thicker, to simulate the consistency of nectar or honey. Thicker drinks may make swallowing safer.

How does one make the drinks thicker? There are numerous OTC (over the counter) products that are specifically made for this purpose. Each product has specific directions and amounts on how to accomplish this task. Most of these additives are made out of modified corn starch. Dentally, this may create issues. Not only does the thickener make everything stickier, it is frequently mixed with sugary drinks, juices, or even soda. This thick, sugary substance now sticks to tooth surfaces and creates a perfect medium for tooth decay or cavities.

In order for dental cavities to form we need three things: a tooth surface, bacteria, and food for bacteria. In this case, the food/sugar from the thickened drink perfectly waits for bacteria to have a nice feast, which eventually leads to tooth decay.

Many dentists are noticing the increase in tooth decay in people who started using thickeners in their drinks. After analyzing the frequency of our thickened liquids, it's easy to see that the teeth are bathing in these "liquids". I looked at the average diet of a person who has dysphagia and uses a thickener in their diet. For breakfast the thickener was added to the milk, juice and coffee. For lunch, the thickener was added to the soup and the juice. For dinner, it was found in the soda and coffee, and let's not forget the 2 snacks of juice and soda midmorning and evening.

So, how does one keep their swallowing safe and keep their teeth healthy? The first step should be a discussion with your dentist or dental hygienist. They should evaluate the quality of your home care. If we can make sure that there are limited bacteria on the teeth through proper tooth brushing and cleaning between the teeth, then the cavity rate may be reduced. I would strongly encourage tooth brushing after each time you have a thickened drink or when thickened drinks are used with the meal. It may sound like a lot of work, but in the long run it will keep you healthier and will eliminate lengthy visits at the dentist. The dentist may also recommend specific toothpaste and fluoride treatments that may benefit the health of the teeth which will lead to the overall health. Remember healthy teeth contribute to healthy bodies.



The DDS Dental Clinics



The Norwich Clinic has been upgraded and is now using digital x-rays to enhance the care of the individuals they treat. Dr. Steve Ruiz had been instrumental in implementing the digital aspect of care in the clinic. His patience, dedication and gentle touch has been a wonderful addition to the Norwich Dental team.

Southbury Dental Clinic would like to welcome Dr. Francisco Suarez and Paulina Karwowski, Dental Assistant, to their team. Their arrival should help the dental clinic expand access to dental services. Their knowledge and experience are wonderful assets for our individuals. Please stop by and meet these dedicated professionals when you have a chance.