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SUMMIT LOOKS TOWARD
FUTURE OF MUSIC

THE FLAIRS
SEND OUT A SIGNAL

CHRIS BOTTI

ONE STEP AT A TIME

TO YOUR HEALTH

Jazz Up Your Dental Care

by Dr. Peter Silver, Local 802 (New York City)

I have been a trumpet player for 39 years, and I am member of Local 802 (New York City). I also have been a dentist for 21 years.

I love both careers and have managed to merge them into one as the "Jazz Dentist of New York City." Over the years I have treated thousands of musicians, specializing in the concerns of wind players. However, this article is about dental care that affects every musician.

Many musicians work very hard to make a living, but don't have a lot of money left over for going to the dentist.

Know Your Enemies

Just like other aspects of life that don't present an emergency, the idea of going to the dentist when nothing seems wrong sounds like a waste of money.

Unfortunately, it is exactly this line of thinking that can get you into tremendous trouble and end up costing much more money or, even worse, the loss of teeth.

The two big enemies of the mouth are gum disease and tooth decay. Strangely enough, both can get into your mouth and do a lot of damage before you have any idea what is going on.

It is believed that most people have some level of gum disease occurring in their mouths right now and don't know it. Unfortunately, studies keep coming out that show that the same bugs that cause gum disease also can travel to the heart and cause life threatening infections.

Locally, these bacteria destroy the foundation of the teeth, the gums, and the bone. Sadly, most tooth loss is due to gum disease.

One warning sign of tooth decay is sensitivity to hot, cold, or sweets; but it might be deep in the tooth by that time. Quite often, the decay gets under an old silver (amalgam) filling and eats away at the tooth until it is too late to save it.

Care at Home

As a musician, you might be on the road or traveling to gigs on the spur of the moment and not in control of your schedule as much as you would like.

For people in this situation, developing a steady morning and evening routine of good

oral hygiene is difficult. I cannot stress enough how important it is to do basic oral hygiene, brushing and flossing, on a daily basis.

You should be using a soft toothbrush; firm ones can be too hard on the gums. If you don't like to floss, or find it difficult, new products can make it easier. For instance, Reach Access Flosser is basically floss on a toothbrush handle and with it you can reach all the way to your molars with ease.

At the Dentist's

Good home care is essential for a healthy mouth, but what's so great about going to the dentist?

There are some advances in dentistry that make dental visits much more pleasant than in the past. Modern digital X-rays expose you to far less radiation. Also, the sensor that is put in your mouth is smaller than the film previously used.

More dentists avoid using the dental "pick" to check for decay. Diagnostic lasers shine a light on your teeth to read for cavities. When you do get a cleaning, ask for some numbing gel on your gums, to make everything much more comfortable.

What if the dentist finds a cavity? When it is a new area of decay, it is now possible to have it removed without any drilling at all! If your dentist has either a laser designed for removing decay or an air abrasion device, they can place a gorgeous tooth-colored filling without any drilling or discomfort.

When it is necessary to get local anesthesia, there are now techniques available that even make getting numb a painless procedure. For musicians who become anxious at the thought of going to the dentist, there are options for them as well.

The use of laughing gas (nitrous oxide), which you breathe in through a mask on your nose, helps many patients. The gas dissociates you from your feelings and lets you relax. And, if the dentist is like me, they will have some really great music for you to listen to while lying back in the chair. Or you can always bring your own!

—Dr. Peter Silver practices in Greenwich Village in Manhattan and performs regularly with his 17-piece big band Blue Nitrous. More information is available at www.jazzdentist.com or just call him at 212-924-6890.