



Sydney Holistic Dental Centre

...linking oral health and general health

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Holistic Dentistry

Dr. Ron Ehrlich was interviewed by

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good health

HOLISTIC DENTISTRY, with its pain-free, overall approach to health and wellbeing, is giving us something to smile about, says Kate Lovelace

all smiles

A dental appointment traditionally carries negative connotations of pain and fear, with not much correlation to overall health. But this is all set to change. A new generation of holistic dentists is looking at the bigger picture when it comes to oral health, and its impact on our wellbeing. The result? A visit to the dentist may now relieve more than just toothache.

Dentistry for wellbeing

Holistic dentists have a mainstream dentistry background, integrated with alternative health practices. The focus is on treating the underlying cause of a dental problem rather than the symptoms alone. All the regular services offered by general dentists are available, but the relationship with the mouth and teeth to the rest of the body is taken into account.

"We relate oral health to general health," says holistic

dentist Ron Ehrlich of Sydney Holistic Dental Centre. "During the first appointment we carefully gather information on the patient's general health history, as well as doing a thorough examination of the lips, tongue, cheeks and palette, including a check for oral cancer, one of the most common and virulent cancers in Australia. We also perform a simple saliva test to determine the body's pH (acid) balance, an important pointer to the state of general health," he says.

Holistic dentistry associates signs and symptoms in the mouth with total body functioning.

Treatments are designed to enhance overall wellbeing, as well as oral health.

The holistic difference

Materials for fillings and other dental work are biocompatible – or compatible with the body, so they won't elicit a rejection response – non-toxic and as close to the structure of a real tooth as possible.

Amalgam fillings, which contain mercury, are removed. A type of ceramic called CEREC is used instead for both fillings and veneers. ▶

■ ■ ■ **X-rays** are digital X-rays which give off 90 per cent less radiation than regular dental X-rays.

■ ■ ■ **Infections** in the mouth are taken seriously due to their profound effect on the rest of the body. Often undiagnosed during a routine dental check-up, bacteria in the mouth quickly reach the bloodstream resulting in inflammation and a long-term strain on the immune system. This inflammation makes our LDL (bad) cholesterol more sticky, which is why gum and heart disease are linked. It's also been shown to affect non-insulin dependent diabetes and other conditions.

■ ■ ■ **Headaches**, neck aches and migraines may clear up after a visit to a holistic dentist, who looks at

the relationship between jaw clenching and muscle activity throughout the body. Simple measures such as wearing a mouthguard to prevent teeth-grinding and learning to break a jaw-clenching habit can bring relief.

■ ■ ■ **Snoring** and sleep apnoea are treated, too. Both conditions are caused by the throat muscles collapsing during sleep, blocking the airway. The use of oral device therapy, where a small mouthguard-like appliance is worn at night, can help maintain an unobstructed airway, and improve general health.

■ ■ ■ **Relaxation** Holistic dentistry provides a calm, supportive environment to soothe the anxious patient and care is taken for optimum comfort, including

the use of a 'rubber dam', a device that prevents water and other debris flying down the throat during treatment. Laughing gas or intravenous sedation are also used in some cases.

■ ■ ■ **Prevention** is the holistic dentist's mantra, and begins with nutritional, lifestyle and postural advice. The Sydney Holistic Dental Centre sums up their model for optimal health as NEAT: nutrition, exercise, avoid toxins and tranquillity.

■ ■ ■ **Nutrition** – see that you eat a healthy balance of proteins, carbohydrates and good fats. Avoid carbonated and sports drinks, excessive amounts of juice and sugar, and a high carbohydrate diet, which promotes acidic body chemistry.

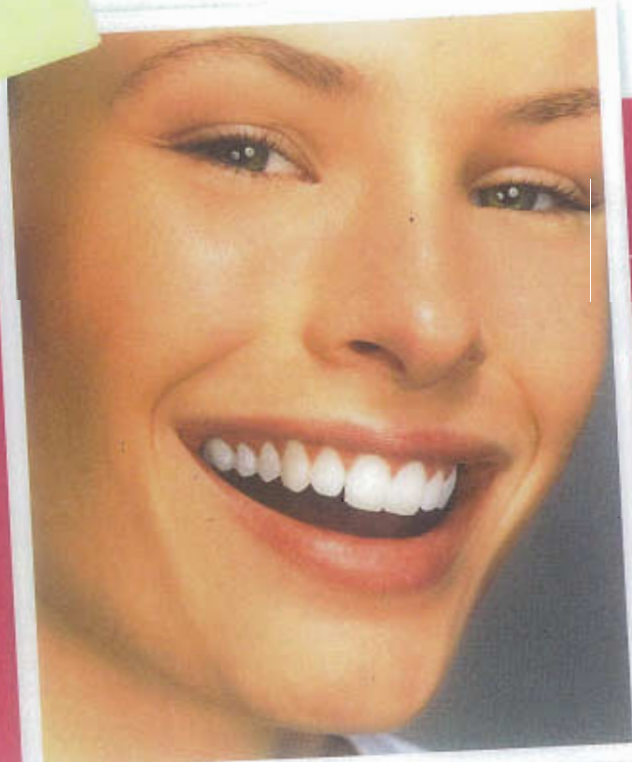
■ ■ ■ **Exercise** – participate for 30-60 minutes a day in some kind of enjoyable physical activity.

■ ■ ■ **Avoid toxins** and microbes – remove all mercury (found in amalgam fillings) and nickel (found in crowns) from the mouth. Minimise harmful bacteria with good dental hygiene and regular check-ups.

■ ■ ■ **Tranquillity** – participate regularly in some form of mental relaxation, such as yoga or gardening.

■ ■ ■ **Herbal medicines**, vitamins and minerals are used in conjunction with dental treatment. For example, arnica drops and calendula help promote healing in the mouth, hypericum (St John's wort) is used for severe toothache or to ease the discomfort of the root canal procedure, and fish oil is used for its anti-inflammatory effects.

■ ■ ■ **What does it cost?** A consultation is around \$70, and is claimable on your private health fund.



did you know...

☀ Amalgam fillings are made of 50 per cent mercury, considered a toxic substance that can affect neurological and hormone functions. Any excess material left over from an amalgam filling must be treated as toxic

waste and is not allowed by law to be thrown in a garbage bin or flushed down the toilet.

☀ If your gums bleed when you brush or floss, it's likely there's some form of inflammation in your mouth.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Sydney Holistic Dental Centre (02) 9221 5800, www.shdc.com.au. If you're not based in Sydney, the centre can refer you to a holistic dentist in your area. ☺

