November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month

A Message From Your Geriatric Toothfairy



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THE GERIATRIC TOOTHFAIRY

For years we have known that there is a direct link between poor oral care and systemic diseases. Many dental professionals educate their patients at their dental visits. I want to take the time to ask you to slow down and read carefully what I am saying NOW! This could save your life.

I work almost daily in nursing homes, providing oral care for our greatest generation "Our Seniors". What I have seen in some resident's mouths has made me cry. Can you imagine not being able to remember your name, your children's names or even that you should brush your teeth? Even worse, can you imagine living in a nursing home sharing a room with another person that you never knew and the person caring for you is too busy to help you brush your teeth? This is the life of many seniors that suffer from Alzheimer.

This disease doesn't play fair. It attacks and is a slow killer, taking something very precious with it our memory. While no one really knows why and how people get this horrible disease, we can do a few things that might help prevent us from getting it.

A study has found that people with poor oral hygiene or gum disease could be at a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's compared with those who have healthy teeth. Porphyromonas Gingivalis, a bacteria associate with Chronic Gum Disease and has been found in the brain of alive people who suffer with Alzheimer Disease. In another study published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, the same bacteria Porphyromonas Gingivalis was found in the post mortem brain of 10 people who had suffered for Alzheimer. I have worked in long term care facilities over the last 15 years and some of the oral care is deplorable. Residents go for weeks without even getting their teeth brushed and denture care is worse.

I was providing oral care at a long-term care facility when the staff ask me to check a resident that had a bad mouth odor. I noticed she had an upper denture, so I removed the denture and noticed the denture was covered in black mold. This 83-year-old women had been at the long-term care facility for 4 months. She did not speak clear English and could not use her hands. The facility staff did not have a clue that she had a denture and she was unable to remove her denture and clean it herself.

I am not trying to talk about the staff at long term care facilities, but I do know most are over worked and under paid. It can become easy to overlook oral care if the staff is not properly trained on the importance of oral care. If I could scream it so the whole world could hear poor oral care is directly linked to our health and it is killing seniors… I would.

During Alzheimer Awareness Month (November), I want everyone to know that poor oral care has been directly related to this terrible disease. It is important that we take care of our teeth daily to help prevent this horrible disease. In addition, if you have a love one in a long-term care facility, check on them and ask how often oral care is being provided. Please visit my YouTube Channel "Geriatric Toothfairy" for more important Oral Care Tips.