

# Negative Dental Impacts of Medications

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 TMJ-Facial Pain



Recently, there have been many reports in the media about the potential effects of taking certain medications.

Specifically, Fosamax, Actonel, Boniva and Zometa are medications given to prevent or treat osteoporosis (a thinning of the bones), or as part of cancer treatment and to prevent or treat Paget's disease of the bone. These types of drugs are called bisphosphonates and are given by mouth or injection.

In some very rare instances, patients using these specific drugs have developed severe bone loss and actual destruction of their jaw bones in a condition called osteonecrosis of the jaw (ONJ).

Let me emphasize that this condition occurs under very rare circumstances and can apparently develop spontaneously among some patients. To date, we cannot predict who will develop ONJ.

However, there appears to be some correlation between the use of bisphosphonates and the onset of ONJ following dental procedures such as tooth extraction, periodontal (gum) surgery, or dental implant placements. ***So, it is critically important to let your dentist know if you are being treated with such medications.***

ONJ is a serious condition with all or some of the following symptoms:

- Pain, swelling or infections of the gums and jaw bones
- Gums that do not heal
- Loose teeth
- Numbness or heavy feeling in the jaw
- Drainage or poor healing especially from a recent extraction site
- Continually exposed bone.

Treatment may include antibiotics, oral rinses and minor procedures to remove the affected tissue and bone. There is evidence that impeccable oral hygiene along with regular dental check-ups and care can reduce the risk of developing osteonecrosis.

This information has been reported and prepared by the American Dental Association Division of Communications, the Journal of the American Dental Association, and the American Dental Association Council of Scientific Affairs.

## Website Attracts Thousands

Dr. Louis Vita's website has become a solid source of information for those who are seeking general dental health information or Dr. Vita's focus area of Temporomandibular Joint dysfunction (TMJ). Please visit [www.DrLouisVita.com](http://www.DrLouisVita.com)



# Fillings

**Facts** *There has been much concern about the safety of using dental amalgam (silver fillings) in both children and adults. Over the past 10 years, there have been numerous claims that the mercury in the fillings contributes to an increase in irritability, memory loss, tremors, poor physical coordination, insomnia, kidney failure and anorexia. There even has been the suggestion that the mercury content of fillings can increase the chance of having a child born with autism.*

*Two recent studies have been conducted which concluded that placing amalgam in children had no adverse health effects. According to Dr. Lawrence Tabak, director of the National Institute of Dental Research, "the strength of the evidence is particularly impressive."*

*To address these concerns, we in dentistry have developed low mercury amalgams. These new silver fillings are superior to their alternatives. We can predictably restore areas of decay with the improved amalgams that will last for many years (between 10 and 15 years) at more reasonable cost.*

*Alternatives to amalgam include direct composites (white fillings), porcelain and gold. In many cases, the white filling can function as well as silver and even appear more natural. Porcelain fillings often last as long as dental amalgam, however they require much more tooth loss in their preparation and can cost up to ten times more than amalgam. Gold has always been the best material and would serve patients even better than amalgam. However, with an increase in cosmetic awareness among patients, gold has not been a favorite over tooth-colored restoration.*

*Therefore, dental amalgams ... especially in their new forms ... have proven to be safe and effective in restoring cavities in both children and adults. Of course, it is the patient's choice which material is chosen. Patients must understand that alternatives to dental amalgam bear higher material costs and longer dental appointments.*

# Soft Drinks Can Damage Teeth

In my dental practice, I regularly encounter patients who complain of hypersensitivity when drinking cold beverages and brushing their teeth. They also have specific areas along their gumline and biting surfaces that are wearing away. This degeneration of the enamel tooth structure is irreversible. It is often caused by not only mechanical wear but by an increased consumption of soft drinks such as sodas, lemonades, other sugared beverages, and even fruit juices.

Most soft drink beverages have high sugar content and are highly acidic. Even artificially sweetened soft drinks such as dietetic sodas can also be a culprit due to their high acid content. When we drink too many of these beverages without washing away the excess from our teeth, the acid remains and chemically erodes the tooth structure.

Once the erosion is through the enamel, it affects the second layer called dentin, which is ten times softer than enamel and the erosion can progress very rapidly.

A research team from the University of Iowa reported that enamel and root erosion occurs with exposure to such beverages as Gatorade, Coca Cola, Diet Coke, Red Bull and even apple juice.

Therefore, use of soft drinks and energy drinks exhibit the most aggressive erosion of dental enamel, especially when they are continually sipped over extended periods of time. So, we recommend the following courses of action:

- 1 Reduce the consumption of soft drinks such as those listed
- 2 Rinse frequently with water following the consumption of soft drinks
- 3 Brush and floss often following the use of all soft drinks
- 4 Change your toothbrush often (monthly) using only a soft bristle brush
- 5 Immediately report all sensitivity
- 6 Maintain regular dental check-ups at a minimum of every six months.

## Hydrofloss: Waterjet Flossing

As part of every dental hygiene and cleaning appointment, we emphasize the importance of removing plaque from patients' teeth. It is the plaque that contains cavity forming bacteria and toxins that can also cause periodontal disease. Proper brushing and flossing are essential to removing plaque. However, the reality is that most patients either do not floss their teeth or do not floss effectively enough to remove the plaque.

For the past ten years, we have advocated the use of the Hydrofloss device. This is a form of a water jet device that utilizes electro-magnetic technology. It differs from the over-the-counter devices by effectively reducing plaque and eliminating the toxins produced by the bacteria.

It is a simple adjunct to proper brushing and flossing. When all three approaches are used by patients, they are able to effectively remove as much plaque as possible.

The feedback from patients over the past decade has been unanimous that they truly feel the difference, even if they only miss one or two days from using the Hydrofloss. Clinically, we have determined that the overall health of the gum tissue is improved when the Hydrofloss is used.

The Hydrofloss unit is available through our hygiene department. We will gladly discuss its use and effectiveness when you schedule your next

# Case Study-J.L.

## Multiple Factors Can Lead to TMJ-Related Maladies

Difficulties with the Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) may arise from one or many causes, including traumatic injuries, infections or illnesses. In some instances, such as that of "J.L.," we encounter a multitude of contributing factors to the patient's discomfort.

### ISSUE

J.L. is a 44-year-old woman who lives in Pennsylvania, nearly four-hours driving distance from our office in Clifton, N.J. Of interest, her father, two grandfathers and brother are all dentists in California, so she has had the benefit of personal professional support in addition to her physicians. Her symptoms began, she reports, in 2003 following root canal therapy in the upper left quadrant. She then required another root canal in the upper right quadrant due to an abscess. Additionally, she had molars extracted in the upper and lower right quadrants. Subsequently, she noticed that her bite was off and she bruxes (grinds) her teeth. She received an occlusal bite guard but said it does not provide relief. The symptoms include the following:

- Fullness and ringing from the right ear which increased following neck treatment
- Bilateral facial pain
- A history of severe headaches originating at the back of the head
- Dental problems which resulted in root canals and subsequent extractions.

### SOLUTION

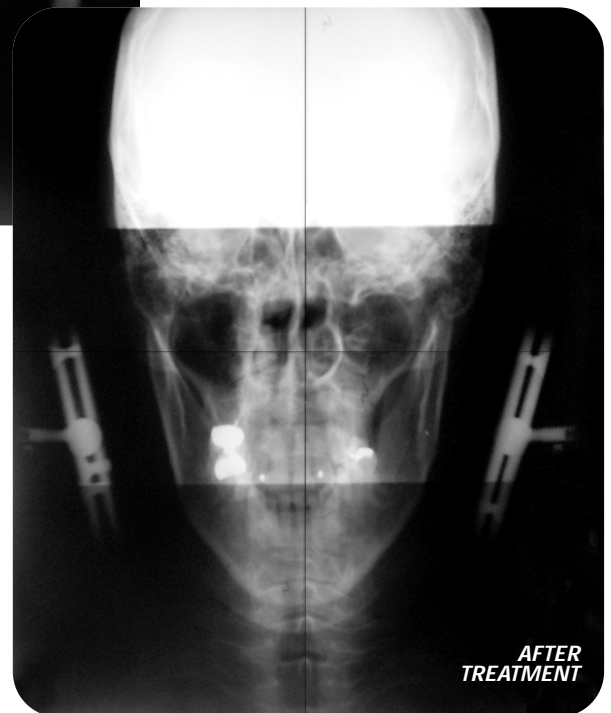
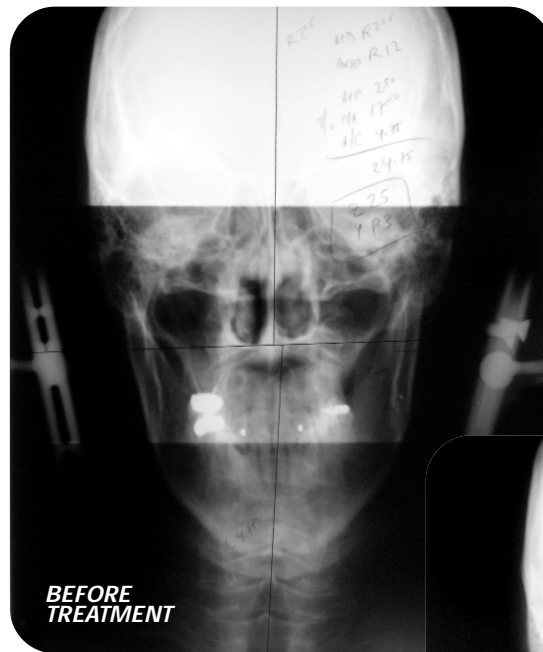
The treatment protocols Dr. Vita initiated included the following:

- Tekscan guided occlusal equilibration to balance her bite and eliminate strain to both TMJs and supporting structures. These included facial and neck muscles with all functioning (both chewing and speaking) and standing, sitting and sleeping postures

- Continual specialized neck treatments to maintain appropriate neck skeletal alignment and reduce muscle spasms
- Appropriate bite guard for night time use only to maintain balance while sleeping.

### RESULTS

Following the initial treatment of the Tekscan bite adjustment alone, J.L. reported greater than 50 percent improvement. Following four weeks of the comprehensive care program instituted by Dr. Vita, she reported more than 90 percent improvement of all systems. Her total treatment program included the Tekscan guided occlusal equilibrations, ongoing specialized



neck treatments, and use of the properly designed bite guard during sleep. She is maintaining her neck position for the first time and reports continuous pain relief and total comfort.

J.L. greatly appreciates the intensive care offered by Dr. Vita and his staff. Most of all, she attributes the restoring of the quality of her life to the comprehensive approach Dr. Vita followed in her treatment program.

## Excerpts from a Vita Pain Center Patient's Letter to her Neurologist

The following are passages from a letter by one of our patients to her neurologist regarding treatment for her chronic migraines:

*"I am writing you to let you know my status for your files and notify you of something to think about when diagnosing patients with migraines.*

*"... After examining me, you indicated that my blood pressure was high and this might be a cause for the headaches ... You placed me on blood pressure medication and gave me pain medication for the headaches.*

*"This medication minimized the pain, but the headaches were still constant and daily. [After commencing chiropractic care] ... there was a slight change, the headaches weren't as constant, but they still weren't gone. ...*

*"During this time of chiropractic treatment, I had gone to my dentist, Louis R. Vita, D.D.S., who had noticed signs of grinding my teeth and soreness in my jaw and neck. He had indicated that his practice specializes in Head, Neck and Facial Pain Relief and he had a specific program with a specialist in his office for treatment of migraines and similar problems, ... I had my first consultation on May 22, 2006.*

*"After initial x-rays and history were taken, Dr. Vita's team determined that I was a perfect candidate for that treatment. The exam and x-rays showed my atlas [joint] was out of alignment and my neck was shaped incorrectly.*

*"I have been holding the adjustment since May 23, 2006, and have not had a headache since mid-June. I am building up my muscles, working on my posture and fixing some bad habits. It has been a great experience and I would recommend Vita Head, Neck and Facial Pain Relief Center to anyone with migraine, head or neck pains. If you care enough for your patients and your current care isn't achieving the proper results, please research and consider this option, as it is very successful."*

### **Dr. Vita adds:**

We are dedicated to relieving our patients of pain and eliminating the root causes of their pain. The human body is very complex and no single approach may be appropriate for the care of our patients. We are committed to finding care modalities that have been proven effective within our own professions as well as others.

# Effective TMJ Pain Therapies

In our efforts to treat patients' pain from TMJ disorders, we are utilizing non-invasive advanced technologies.

These are mainly low level laser therapy and pulsed radio frequency energy therapy.

Medical low level laser therapy is also known as "cold" laser. By delivering infrared stimulation to injured and damaged tissues, the laser helps the body heal itself, while decreasing pain and inflammation. It actually stimulates the healing process at the cell level, while enhancing the body's natural defense and repair capabilities with regard to physical injuries from trauma or disease.

Pulsed radio frequency energy is a different form of treating damaged tissues. When the pulsed energy penetrates injured tissue, it reduces the pain forming substance and provides relief at the site of the injury.

Both approaches are FDA approved, completely safe and beneficial. They have been shown to provide healing and relief under the right circumstances. Both approaches require a treatment protocol of two to three times per week for a period of three to four weeks to achieve maximum effectiveness.

For more information or to  
make an appointment call: **973-777-1933**  
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