



A DENTAL ASSISTANT WHO'S AFRAID OF THE DENTIST? YES, IT'S A THING! MEET BEATRIZ

I hope you enjoyed the peek into Jennifer's life in last month's newsletter! She's a registered dental hygienist (RDH) here, and I loved reading the story about her falling in love with dentistry as a little kid. It's not too far from my own background growing up in my parents' dental office.

This month, I want to continue our series of chats with our staff by highlighting Beatriz, my amazing registered dental assistant (RDA). She has been with my family at Great Smiles for pretty much her whole career — since 2006!

Beatriz is one of the most skilled RDAs I've ever worked with. In fact, I'd rather have her treat me than some dentists I've met! She has incredibly gentle hands and always puts our patients at ease when she walks into the room. She also does the fastest adjustments in the East. I'm serious — patients have told me that her lighting speed makes me look slow. Thank goodness we're on the same team!

Here's a word from the wonder woman herself.

That was such a nice introduction, thank you, Dr. Weddle. I'm glad that you pointed out my chairside manner because that's actually a funny story. The reason I'm always so gentle and empathetic with our patients is that I know exactly how scary it is to sit in the dentist's chair!

It's true: Even though I work in a dental office, I'm still scared of having my own teeth worked on. I get so nervous that my knuckles go white from grabbing the chair arms as hard as I can. No matter how much trust I have in Dr. Weddle and everyone else at the office, I'm still a nervous wreck — it's totally irrational, but I can't help it.

With that perspective in mind, I try to always approach our patients, especially new or nervous patients, with kindness. I want them to have a great experience in our office with as

little fear as possible. If I can make a joke or tell them I get just as freaked out as they are, I'll always do it to get a smile and make them feel at ease.

Knowing that I have a hard time at the dentist, you're probably wondering how I ended up working in a dentist's office! I started working in the field back in 2002 when my dad, who managed the Jamaica Hospital Medical Center building in Queens, suggested I try vocational training in the hospital there. Funnily enough, when I'm not in the chair myself all of my fears disappear!

Dentistry immediately caught my attention because there was so much to learn. I wanted to know everything about teeth, how to repair them, and how to read an X-ray. To this day, I'm still obsessed with learning as much as I can, and I love that I get to do a little bit of everything while assisting Dr. Weddle with crowns, extractions, fillings, orthodontics, endodontics, and more! I initially worked for Dr. Weddle's mom in 2006, and then joined her here at Great Smiles of New Jersey. Dr. Weddle is constantly bringing me new "toys" (dental devices) to learn.

Between our work on sleep apnea, TMJ, and cosmetic dentistry, I never get bored!

Apart from being my boss, Dr. Weddle is also a great friend. We've watched each other's kids grow up over the years (my son Jose is 16 and my daughter Victoria just turned 14), and we both love dancing and spending time with our families. I can't imagine working anywhere else!

I'll see you in the chair soon!

-Beatriz Gutierrez, RDA



Arthritis Is More Prevalent Than You Realize

GET THE FACTS

Nearly 1 in 4 U.S. adults have been diagnosed with arthritis — and as the population ages, those numbers are only expected to increase. Arthritis affects the joints, and it can have a significant impact on a person's well-being, ability to work, and overall quality of life. With cases being so prevalent, it's wise to know the facts. Who is at risk of arthritis, and what are the treatments? Here's everything you need to know.

Symptoms

The symptoms of arthritis will largely depend on the type of arthritis a person has. There are over 100 different types of arthritis, but the most common are osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and fibromyalgia. Most types cause stiffness or pain in the joints, and it can affect only one joint, some joints but not others, or all joints. Some types of arthritis develop gradually, while others have a sudden onset, and symptoms may be persistent or come and go.

If you suspect you have arthritis, you should visit a doctor for a formal diagnosis. Your physician will review your medical history, perform a physical examination, and request X-rays or blood tests to confirm your arthritis and the type. That way they can target treatment effectively.



Risk Factors

Unfortunately, the causes of many types of arthritis are unknown, but the existing science does have something to say about who is at risk of developing the condition. Some factors you can't control. For example, two-thirds of people with arthritis are women, and the risk of arthritis rises as you get older. Some people also have inherited genes that increase their disposition toward developing arthritis.

Some factors, however, can be mitigated. People who are overweight or smoke are more likely to develop different types of arthritis. Studies have linked joint injury and infection to arthritis, so make sure to seek medical care for any pain or swelling. Further, people who don't engage in physical activity during leisure time are the most likely to have arthritis, so exercise may help prevent the condition.

Treatment

There is currently no cure for arthritis, but collaboration with a doctor can help you manage the condition. The goal of treatment is to reduce pain, minimize joint damage, and improve overall ability and function. Depending on the arthritis type, treatment can include physical therapy, exercise, medication, or even surgery. A doctor or physical therapist can help you understand how to move safely and recommend healthy exercises for your joints. But the key is to ask for help in the first place.

If you suspect you have arthritis, or if your arthritis is currently untreated, you should seek the advice of a medical professional right away. There is hope for managing your condition, reducing your pain, and increasing your quality of life. A qualified doctor or physical therapist can help you improve your daily function and comfort so you can get back to doing the things you love.



ICE OR HEAT? *How to Treat Injuries at Home*

Whenever we suffer an injury that doesn't require a doctor visit, we are usually told to do one of two things: ice the area or apply heat to it.

Different injuries require different treatments. For example, applying heat to an ankle sprain will not help as much as applying ice. Let's look at which injuries require heat or ice and how it relieves pain or reduces swelling.

Injuries You Should Apply Ice To

You want to apply ice to acute or short-term injuries. Acute injuries consist of ankle or knee sprains, muscle or joint sprains, red or swollen body parts, and pain after an exercise.

Icing an area will lower the amount of swelling you have and make the healing process quicker. Be sure to limit icing sessions to 20 minutes. Over-icing can irritate your skin or cause tissue damage. If you have an ice pack or frozen packages in your freezer, you can use those to treat the painful areas. If not, you can put ice in a bag. Wrap it or any other item you're using in a paper towel or washcloth before applying it to your skin. You should continue to ice your injury for the next two days.

Injuries You Should Apply Heat To

If you have chronic pain, it's best to apply heat to that area.

This pain can tell you that your body hasn't fully healed from the injury. You can use heat for muscle pain or soreness, stiff joints, arthritis, and recurring injuries.

Applying heat allows your blood vessels to expand and help your muscles relax. Only use heat in 20-minute increments and don't sleep with any heating treatment. This can cause blisters, irritation, and maybe burns. You can use heat for 2-3 days after the injury occurs. Use a heating pad or a hot, wet towel, or take a hot shower or bath to relieve pain.

An easy way to determine if you need to ice or heat an area is this: If it's swollen, apply ice. If it's stiff, use heat. But if you're unsure if you should use ice or heat, or if the pain is still occurring after treatment, contact your PT for assistance. They will provide you with further treatment options to help you with your discomforts.



TAKE A
BREAK!

CALORIES DON'T COUNT

ON PI DAY, DEAR!



EASY MARCH
MADNESS CHILI

Inspired by MyRecipes.com

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tbsp chili powder
- 2 16-oz cans diced tomatoes
- 1 tbsp Creole seasoning
- 2 16-oz cans small red beans
- 2 8-oz cans tomato sauce

DIRECTIONS

1. In a deep pot, brown the beef, stirring often.
2. Once beef is cooked, add chili powder, Creole seasoning, and cumin, cooking for 1 minute.
3. Stir in diced tomatoes, beans, and tomato sauce and bring the mixture to a boil.
4. After the mixture boils, reduce the heat to low and let chili simmer for 15 minutes.
5. Serve with toppings of choice, like cheese, sour cream, or chives.

IRISH YOU
WOULD STOP
HUMILIATING ME.

10 Shawnee Drive
Watchung, NJ 07069

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Wait ... You Can't Wear *That!*

The Do's and Don'ts of Dressing for PT

A physical therapy appointment isn't exactly a night at the prom, but the two do have something in common: the moment you find yourself in front of the mirror wondering, "What the heck should I wear?" If you're nervous ahead of your first physical therapy appointment, let these do's and don'ts guide your outfit choice.

DO wear comfortable, flexible clothes.

A pencil skirt may look great in the office, but it's not the best outfit for physical therapy. You'll need to get *physical* at your appointment. If you don't have a good range of motion in your outfit — in other words, if you can't toss a ball or do a lunge — it's probably not PT-friendly.

DON'T wear flip-flops or dress shoes.

Closed-toed, high-traction sneakers and socks are better choices. There are

tripping hazards like mats and exercise balls in the clinic, and your PT would hate to see you get hurt when you're there to get help!

DO dress according to your injury. PTs generally ask that you wear a full outfit of loose-fitting clothing for treatment, but you need to pay particular attention to the area of your injury. A tight-fitting sweater will make it hard for your PT to access your rotator cuff, and if you have a knee injury, then tight leggings are a bad choice. Instead, look for pants you can roll up over your knee.

DON'T come straight from the gym.

Since activewear and close-toed shoes are recommended for PT, you might be tempted to book your appointment right after your gym visit or hospital shift. Don't do it! Your clothes need to be clean, not sweaty or germ-covered.



DO layer up. Physical therapy often involves heating pads and cold compresses, which can make you sweat or shiver. To keep yourself comfortable, wear layers you can peel off or add on according to your treatment.

DON'T lather on lotion. Some PTs recommend against using lotion before your appointment because "it can reduce the traction that the therapist needs for your treatment." When in doubt, go without.

With these tips in your back pocket, you can start or return to PT with confidence.