Can Vitamin B6 Prevent Cavities in the Unborn?  
A review of studies by the Cochrane Collaboration suggests that vitamin B6 might do more for the fetus besides aid in the development of the brain, central nervous system, and cognitive function. Scientists postulate that it might even prevent dental caries as well as protect the vascular bed of the placenta.

Although there is not yet enough research to support this claim, the benefits for pregnant women were undeniable. The 571 women in one study who took vitamin B6 (also called pyridoxine) supplements in oral capsule or lozenge form had a lower incidence of dental decay.

'Spicy' Cures for Cancer  
As the seventh most common form of cancer in Taiwan, there are approximately 2,000 cases of oral cancer reported every year. Not surprisingly, 90% of those who die from oral cancer were betel nut users.

Researchers at National Taiwan University’s Department of Internal Medicine are among those seeking ways to fight cancer. In one study, led by Dr. Ann-Lai Cheng, seven patients with precursors to oral cancer were given large doses of turmeric and its effects tracked.

During Dr. Cheng’s study, the patients took 800 milligrams a day of turmeric for three months. The patient’s leukoplakia improved and only a few suffered from mild gastrointestinal distress due to the large doses. Previous studies have shown that turmeric is an antioxidant and can be used as an anti-inflammatory.

Dentistry ‘Down Under’  
It all depends upon where you live, of course. In Tasmania there are 25.5 dentists for every 100,000 citizens, but more than twice that number (59.5) for those in the Australian Capital Territory.

A report released in September 2005 by the AIHW’s Dental Statistics and Research Unit at the University of Adelaide explains that dentists are evenly dispersed across Australia’s states and territories.

Overall, capital cities boast 55.7 dentists per 100,000, in contrast to 51.4 for those in the states and territories.

New Strategies for Promoting Oral Health for All  
Aubrey Sheiham, United Kingdom  

The future of clinical dentists lies in fewer procedures of higher quality, together with prevention. The role of dentists will be advising patients about oral health, investigating and controlling the risks, influencing the behaviour of patients, diagnosing oral and dental diseases, providing high-quality dental care, administration of a dental team of auxiliaries.

A public health approach should include three main elements. A common risk factor approach to prevention, a population rather than a high-risk preventive strategy and an intersectoral health promotion multi-level strategy. In addition, an evidence-based approach should be mandatory.

Dental Treatment Uncool?  
By Cornelia Birr  

Teenagers are reluctant to go the dentist even if these visits are free because dental care is viewed as uncool, recent research from the University of Otago, New Zealand, has found. The study involved 140 pupils from 14 schools, training centres or agencies. Although kids were aware of what good oral health required (teeth brushing, etc.), they failed to make use of the free care.

In short, teenagers believed oral health was trivial, time-wasting and boring; many students experienced it as being “slightly coercive in nature.” Moreover, dental care was considered effeminate. “To engage in oral health care is to flirt with a slightly feminised and somewhat stigmatised set of practices and all of the adolescents with whom we spoke had very fixed opinions of whether or not they would participate in such a regime,” the report says.

Another factor seems to be the anticipation of the costs of future dental care. Because they had pre-existing perceptions of not being able to afford dental care in the long run, they saw little point in using the free dental care. Anthropologist Ruth Fitzgerald, co-author of the study, said: “They seem to have taken on the values of their parents that it is too expensive, and they don’t want to bother with it.”

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