

# ounce of technology pound of prevention



Preventive care is vital at any age. New technologies reveal problems early, making dental care a welcome experience

Each year, February brings days of discovery—Groundhog Day when Punxsutawney Phil emerges to tell us how many weeks until spring; Valentine’s Day when we reveal our hearts’ secrets; and Children’s Dental Health Month when dentists and parents plan for dental care and prevention.

To properly diagnose and treat children, or adults for that matter, dentists glean many “inside facts” from radiography. As a part of the ongoing assessment of a child’s changing oral health, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends X-ray examinations as often as every six months to detect cavities developing between the teeth. Besides decay, the academy notes that X-rays may be necessary to survey erupting teeth, diagnose bone diseases, evaluate the injury results or plan orthodontic treatment.



At Shelbourne Dental Care in Reading, Pennsylvania, Gregory Cortellessa, DMD and hygienist Wendy Sandritter use technology such as digital imaging and laser caries detection to improve diagnosis. “I had already been a hygienist for 25 years when Dr. Cortellessa built this office and we added the Gendex [Orthoralex®] 8500 digital pan,” says Sandritter, adding that Dr. Cortellessa decided on Gendex “after thorough research of the different pans on the market.”

Sandritter adds, “I thought the technology would be intimidating; but the system is simple to use. I don’t know how anyone can justify using film anymore.”

Dr. Cortellessa, who captures his digital images with the Gendex expertDC, describes the ways digital technology is integral to patient education. “With patients of all ages, the digital X-ray images allow them to see what I see,” describes Dr. Cortellessa. “Especially with children, I can sit with them, show them the digital im-

well. Additionally at adult preventive visits, using a DIAGNOdent Perio Tip can help find subgingival calculus that could otherwise go undetected. “In some cases, without early detection, the pathology would progress to where irreversible changes have taken place in the soft tissue and bone,” Dr. Cortellessa notes.

People of all ages are happier to hear the dental office is environmentally responsible. Chemicals needed for traditional X-rays must be properly stored and disposed of at extra cost to the practice. “I love the fact I don’t have to use the developer and developer or clean the whole apparatus,” says Sandritter. She adds that digital radiography also saves time and is more comfortable. The rounded corners of their Visualix®eHD sensors are more comfortable than traditional X-ray film that can cut into delicate oral tissues, and their ergonomic shape allows for simplified sensor positioning. Faster X-ray captures result in shorter appointment times—something the patient, children and adults alike greatly appreciate.

Preventive care is important at any age. Digital imaging and technology, such as laser caries detection, gives dentists the advantage of finding and treating



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age and point out their bone, decay and the mixed dentition of their teeth as they grow. Kids think that’s really cool.”

“I colorize the image for them, and then I print the pan out so they can take it home,” Sandritter adds, noting even children can spread the word about a technology-savvy practice, potentially resulting in new referrals. “Many of them take their pans to school for show-and-tell.”

Besides digital imaging, Dr. Cortellessa uses a DIAGNOdent laser caries detection system. “Diagnosing hidden caries and finding tooth decay in the early stages can save a child or an adult from more complicated procedures in the future,” says Dr. Cortellessa.

“The DIAGNOdent is a great learning tool for kids. When they hear the beep, they know we’ve found another one,” Sandritter comments. “After they hear a few beeps, they go home and brush a little better. It’s a painless way to teach prevention.” This works the same for adults as

problems early, making dental care a more comfortable and a memorable experience. Children’s Dental Health Month gives dentists a chance to spread the word about preventive dental care, and after a positive, educational dental experience, the patients will spread the word about the practice too. ■

**DR. GREGORY P. CORTELLESA, DMD**, is a practicing dentist with 20 years experience. He received his DMD degree from Temple University in 1989 and continued his training at The Community General Hospital of Reading, PA thereafter. His private practice is located in Reading, where he has spent his entire career. **WENDY J. SANDRITTER, RDH** received her RDH degree from the Temple University School of Dentistry. With 25 years of experience, she has worked at several dental practices in her hometown area of Reading, PA. Wendy and Dr. Cortellessa have worked together for 12 years.