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Innovative planning for better oral health

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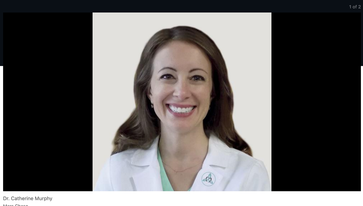

Dr. Catherine Murphy
Marc Chase

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Marc Chase

I am an orthodontist who treats holistically, treating the whole person. To do this, I serve as a health-care strategy partner. I refer to and work with other professionals when necessary to achieve optimum dental health as part of the overall health of my patients.

Our teeth tell a lot about our general health. The mouth is a mirror that reflects what is going on in the body. That's what happened when I began treating a patient last year.

Meet Melanie

Melanie is a teenager who visited my office because she wanted her front teeth straightened. She also reported problems with TMJ and teeth grinding.

When talking with Melanie's mother to compile a complete medical history, I learned that when Melanie was an infant, she nursed for three months with difficulty and had acid reflux. As Melanie got older, she became very mobile while sleeping and started to grind her teeth.

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Melanie said that she suffers from anxiety. She said she has a fear of choking, and it's difficult for her to swallow pills. That requires her to find creative ways to take her medication for anxiety and migraines. Her migraines cause her to miss numerous school days.

Doctors removed Melanie's tonsils previously. She has an extra tooth, which contributes to crowding. She had TMJ pain despite treatment in 2016. Melanie reported a history of nail biting, has a moderate overbite (top teeth going over the bottom teeth too much) and a significant upper jaw protrusion called overjet. She had a restricted tongue and lip, also known as a tongue tie and lip tie.

Developing a health-care strategy

My passion is to help others by serving as a health-care strategy partner to patients of all ages. I'm glad that the desire for braces brought Melanie to my office. However, braces were not her primary need. The priority is to address the underlying causes of her symptoms.

To help Melanie get the best results, I compiled a list of referrals. The first step was myofunctional therapy, which addresses dysfunctional muscle patterns and postures of the oral and facial muscles.

A common dysfunction is mouth breathing. Myofunctional therapist Tracy Biggs M.A., CCC-SLP, CLC, worked with Melanie on teeth clenching and grinding, evaluating restricted tissues, and mouth breathing.

Myofunctional therapy results

Tracy Biggs commented on Melanie's treatment: "My role is to address functional breathing, tongue and lip function related to swallowing and speech. Through diagnostic testing we found that Melanie's tongue functions were compromised due to a restriction or tongue tie. We addressed forming new breathing and tongue positioning habits and strengthening her lips, tongue and jaw. This improved swallowing. After starting speech therapy, she had her tongue tie released. which improved tongue range of motion and ability to function when swallowing. Additional therapy helped her achieve her goal to swallow pills."

Physical therapy

I recommended that Melanie see a chiropractor and/or physical therapist. Many patients with TMJ concerns actually have significant issues with muscles that affect the joint. Chiropractors and physical therapists trained in TMJ treatment have helped many of my patients to relieve overly activated muscles due to clenching and grinding. The practitioner helped Melanie work through years of compensations.

Breathing

Melanie returned to my office for re-evaluation and follow-up as her health-care strategy partner. I provided additional steps Melanie can take to ensure continued ideal nasal breathing, such as training with a Butekyo Breathing instructor. We collaborate with professionals who can help evaluate her diet to provide optimum nutrition, which can ease inflammation, improve overall well-being and boost immunity. Melanie and her mother are thrilled with her progress and have options to continue on the path to health with fewer migraines and fewer missed days of school.

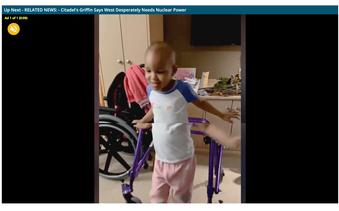
Positive results

Melanie followed my health-care strategy plan, and this is what she had to say:

"My overall health is so much better now. I don't wake up with migraines anymore. I'm not clenching my teeth as much. Physical therapy helped take the strain off my neck. It helped get my posture and shoulder blades back to the correct position so my headaches and jaw pain were significantly reduced. It helped relieve tension.

"In addition, myofunctional therapy has helped tremendously. Tracy helped me learn how to swallow properly. We retrained my tongue to be in the normal position at all Murphy, I got so much more. I am very grateful for everything she has done for me."

It's your turn.



To learn how Dr. Murphy can help, call 219-924-4031 for a free consultation or visit **www.inharmonyorthodontics.com**.

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By Marc Chase

Editor

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