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PRESS ARTICLE

Mouth Florae Not All Bad



A tremendous variety of microbes including viruses, fungi, amoeba and bacteria live in the human mouth.

The bacteria are the most numerous: there are 500 million in every teaspoon of saliva, and they number more than 600 different species. Around half of these have yet to be named. Now Professor William Wade from King's College London Dental Institute is working on identifying and naming these species.

It is remarkable that we know more about microbes on the moon than we do in our own mouth. It is reminiscent of the ignorance we have about colon florae. However, we do know that colon florae, under the conditions that nature intended, are supposed to work in harmony with our bodies. They are supposed to make a positive contribution to achieving optimum health. It is almost certain that the same applies to the kinds of bugs living in our mouths.

Nature did not intend us to suffer gum disease and dental caries. All the evidence points to how the modern lifestyle, notably diet, fosters the overgrowth of mouth organisms that would be more at home in a septic tank.

In *Deadly Harvest* I write about the San Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. Researchers studied them while they were still unspoilt by contact with the outside world. In 1966, the South African ear, nose, and throat specialists John Jarvis and H.G. van Heerden made tests on 10 old Kalahari Bushmen and found that they had mouths full of perfect teeth, free of cavities.

As far back as the 1930's, Dr. Weston Price, a Cleveland dentist, searched for the causes of dental decay by studying "people with fine teeth" – the isolated "primitives".

Famously, Dr Price travelled the world to study Eskimos, American Indians, Polynesians, Australian Aborigines, Maori and many more. Wherever he went, Dr. Price found that they had beautiful straight teeth and freedom from decay.

Dr Price put their good dental health down to the absence of “impoverished foods of civilization” – sugar, white flour, pasteurized milk, and convenience foods filled with extenders and additives’. Today we know for sure that our evolutionary history never designed us to consume grains, cereals, potatoes, starches, dairy, most fats, and sugar – let alone their highly processed confections and derivatives.

In contrast, the “primitives” diet consisted solely of vegetable matter and some animal matter. They didn’t use antiseptic mouthwash and they didn’t brush their teeth. Under these conditions, the mouth flora are harmless and might even contribute to keeping their bodies healthy.

It raises interesting questions. What harm would those “primitives” do to themselves if they used mouthwashes? Would they be killing friendly organisms – the ones that nature expressly provided to contribute to optimum health? What about us? If we eat and live like I say, could we too dispense with mouthwashes and even brushing our teeth? We need much more research, such as that done by Professor Wade, to fully understand how.

In the meantime, it is prudent to continue with conventional mouth hygiene – and watch this space!

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Geoff Bond is a nutritional anthropologist and a recognized authority on what it means to be human in lifestyle terms. He lectures widely and is available for the occasional talk to interested groups. Contact him at GeoffBond@naturaleater.com. Rosie Charalambous interviewed Geoff recently for her “Round and About” program on CYBC radio. You can hear it again on www.cybc.com.cy.

Geoff’s latest book, *Deadly Harvest*, is the reference work for lifestyle anthropology and the mastering of degenerative disease. Consult it for free on Geoff’s website and obtain the hard copy from any good bookstore. More information about Geoff’s work on his website: www.naturaleater.com.