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**When Proactive Dentistry Is**  
*Exceptional*  
**And More Lessons I Learn From All of You**

Several years ago, I had a treatment planning meeting with a patient who would end up teaching me an important lesson, solidifying my approach to dentistry. At 84 years old, this man was referred to me by his sister, who noticed he needed some serious help. I had a look at his teeth, and to put it mildly, they were in really poor shape.

When I agreed with him, he asked me, "But have you ever seen a luggage rack on a hearse?"

As cheeky as it was, the lesson was spot-on for me. He stated, "If you could give me five more years, it would be worth it, and it makes up for what 'you guys' haven't done for the past 50 years." When it came down to it, the work he was looking at should've been done when he was 30 – or when he was 60, even. For me, there would be no question about that. But over the years, doctors had clearly taken the "crown a year" approach, and he was left to deal with the outcome. I realized that always having the patient's best interest in mind isn't the standard across the board.

of reactive. It's not just reacting to a problem after it presents itself, but rather approaching each and every patient with their future in mind. This gives you a better chance at avoiding problems altogether. I know now that this approach is what many of my patients love about coming to Howard County Smiles, and I know now that it's not typical. What I've always seen as natural – providing proactive care wherever possible – is what evidently sets me apart.

After years and years of comments and endless reviews, I understand now what proactive really means. I wonder sometimes if I learn more from my patients than they learn from me.

I sincerely love the field of dentistry. I know many people feel anxious when they visit a dentist, and perhaps they've had negative experiences or outcomes associated with dental work. For me, that's an opportunity to be better and exceed their expectations. And a big part of making that experience the best it can be is considering each patient's dental future and setting them up for success down the road – no matter what.

*- Dr. Becker*

My assistant reassured me. "Be honest," she said. "Tell him what you see and leave it up to him."

While it's the kindest compliment of our patients to refer their family and friends I remember thinking to myself, "What in the world am I going to do? This guy is 84 years old, after all."

**"...the kindest compliment is the referral of Family and Friends"**

When I began explaining what I saw, I felt like I might be beating around the bush. It was tense. The man looked at me. "I know where you're going with this," he said. "I need a lot of work done." And he was absolutely right. There was a significant amount of work to be done.

For so long, I've had patients call me "proactive." I always thought it's a nice word to throw around on their wonderful reviews of the practice, but it never really resonated. Now, when I think of proactive dentistry, I think of it as one of the most defining characteristics of what I do. A proactive approach is the opposite



you're there. And last, don't forget to have fun! A beach getaway may be just what the doctor ordered before the stresses of the holiday season set in.

*4 Southern Beaches You Can't Afford to Miss!*

Head to the beach this fall! Destinations packed with people in July will now bend over backward for any tourist or local who comes their way. Everything from gas to hotel rooms to gear rentals will cost less now than in the summer months. So what are you waiting for? Here are our picks for the best Southern beaches this fall.

**Wrightsville Beach** in Wilmington, North Carolina, is always crowded in the summer. But in fall? Low humidity and cooler nights keep the tourists and mosquitoes away – while the water stays around 80 degrees.

avoiding the crowds that form in Miami and Tampa. In the autumn, the town gets even better with October's Greek Culture Festival and November's Pirate Gathering Festival.

**Tybee Island** near Savannah, Georgia, is famous for its lighthouse, but it's also famous for temperate fall weather and beautiful stretches of beach. Savannah regularly ranks as one of the most beautiful cities in the country, which means a visit to Tybee could be your most picturesque vacation yet.

**Pensacola, Florida**, is close to several great beaches. Temperatures stay high in the 80s all through October and into November, but travel and room rates drop by a third or sometimes even half of what they are in the summertime.

Before you go, keep a few things in mind. First, book in advance for low rates. Second, October is still hurricane season, so check the forecasts before you go and while

**St. Augustine Beach** in St. Augustine, Florida, has long been a favorite for those

# Don't Block That Draft With Cash

## How to Save Money on Heating This Winter

If you use your heat during the winter months, chances are you're throwing money away trying to keep the house warm. If you can't afford to upgrade your water heater, furnace, windows, and doors before winter, there are some simple and inexpensive steps you can take to save on your energy bill.

**TAKE CARE OF YOUR WATER HEATER.** To avoid particles and sediment from collecting for too long, flush the water out of the water heater through the drain valve. This will make the unit run more efficiently. Lowering the temperature of your water heater can also reduce your heating costs by 10 percent.

**CLEAN YOUR GUTTERS.** Cleaning your gutters is an inexpensive way to make sure your house stays warmer this winter. Inspect them and make sure there's nothing blocking the flow of water, which can cause standing water – and soon, ice – to build up.

**FIND A DRAFT SNAKE RIGHT AWAY.** Drafty windows and doors can be irritating. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, taking measures to reduce drafts in your home can save you anywhere from 5–30 percent in energy savings a year. Roll up a towel or create a draft snake to fit along the bottom of your door using fabric filled with sand or another hefty material that stays put.

**MASK THE SNEAKY BREEZES.** Other ways to reduce cold air from entering your home include weatherstrip tape, which you can purchase for just a few dollars per roll, new caulking, and fiberglass insulation. With careful application to the attic, empty rooms, and around air conditioners and



basement doors, insulation is an effective way to keep heat inside where it belongs.

Don't wait until the weather outside is frightful. Now is the time to start preparing your home for higher efficiency and your wallet for more cash.

## Can TMJ Be Treated?

The temporomandibular joint, or TMJ, connects the upper jaw to the lower jaw. Since it's responsible for opening and closing your jaw, problems with it are common, and the symptoms are persistent. Issues with this joint, as well as problems with the muscles in the face, neck, and surrounding nerves, are often classified as a temporomandibular disorder – TMD – which may be any one of 31 specific disorders.

These conditions can be painful, as they make using the TMJ and muscles around it more strenuous, but with proper diagnosis, you can get the treatment you need. Many of the disorders referred to as TMD are commonly caused by trauma, joint diseases, hormonal changes, bite problems, or stress. These disorders can lead to headaches

or earaches that can easily be mistaken for other health problems. Additionally, patients may experience teeth clenching, which can lead to tooth breakdown.

Patients often do not realize they are suffering from TMD-related issue. Because there is a wide range of specific disorders, symptoms can range as well. You may feel head, shoulder, neck, or facial pain, clicking or popping when opening or closing the jaw, locked jaw or limited mobility in the jaw joint, teeth clenching or grinding, chronic earaches, or tooth sensitivities.

At Howard County Smiles, we have a number of diagnostic tools and the skill set to make an accurate diagnosis of your condition. You want relief, but not all

treatments are created equal. Our goal is to find the treatment option that fits your specific condition. In some cases, we may recommend a removable mouth guard worn at night. Or we may go in a different direction with bite correction, which addresses the alignment of your jaw. Or we may suggest another alternative. Again, it all comes down to proper diagnosis.

Dr. Becker is one of the most experienced dentists in Maryland for the diagnosis and treatment of TMD-related issues. Internationally renowned, he has written numerous peer reviewed journal articles on the subject and recently contributed to a chapter in a widely acclaimed research reference textbook on TMD and occlusion.

## Great Smiles for Years to Come Invisalign Is the Clear Alternative to Braces

*Nobody wants to hide their smile. Aside from the confidence a beautiful smile brings, straighter teeth work better. Consider this: Your mouth is a system of bones, muscles, and joints. When you have straighter teeth and an aligned bite, this system works more effectively and more comfortably. Because of that, occlusion, or the position of your teeth, matters more than you might think. When your occlusion is off, your teeth are not only at a greater risk for tooth decay or gum disease, but you may experience more fractures, failures, and overall discomfort of the teeth, muscles, and joints.*

One option for straighter teeth is Invisalign. Invisalign can create a great-looking and healthy smile at any age. These clear, removable orthodontic aligners work wonders when straightening misaligned teeth, but they're not all about achieving better looks. Properly aligned teeth are healthier teeth – they're easier to clean and will

improve activities that are second nature, like chewing and speaking.

Dr. Becker understands and even teaches other doctors about the nuances of a proper occlusion, and he uses these principles and software to optimize your bite. Invisalign then creates a custom treatment plan using a series of removable

clear aligners that will gradually move the teeth into the desired position. A "clear alternative" to braces, Invisalign corrects dental health or cosmetic problems efficiently and comfortably. Since they're removable, Invisalign aligners allow you to better keep your teeth clean throughout the process than with traditional braces.

**Smile on!** If you want to achieve a more confident, healthy smile, Invisalign may be right for you. This treatment is available for patients of any age and typically only takes between six to nine months, depending on your desired result. Contact us today to schedule your consultation – the first step to an improved smile for years to come.

Recipe courtesy of foodnetwork.com.

## Perfectly Fall Apple Crisp

### Ingredients

#### Filling:

- 6 baking apples, peeled, cored, and cut into wedges
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour

#### Topping:

- 1 ¼ cups flour
- ½ cup rolled oats
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 12 tablespoons butter (1 ½ sticks), chilled and cut into small pieces
- ½ cup nuts, coarsely chopped and toasted

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.  
*For the fruit filling:*
2. In a large mixing bowl, toss together apples, lemon juice, sugar, and flour. Pour the apple mixture into a buttered 2-quart baking dish and set aside.  
*For the topping:*
3. In a large mixing bowl, mix the flour, rolled oats, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. With a food processor or pastry blender, work the butter into the flour mixture – just until it forms large clumps. Fold nuts into mixture.
4. Sprinkle the topping evenly over the fruit. Bake the apple crisp until the fruit is bubbling and the topping is golden brown and crisp – about 45 minutes.



## Laughing Gas

