**Adult Oral Care**

As an adult you are NOT immune to dental problems. In addition to maintaining a good home care routine, the best thing you can do is to schedule regular dental checkups and professional cleanings.

As we get older, dental care for adults is crucial. Here are a few of the conditions to be aware of:

**Gum disease**—if your home care routine of brushing and flossing has slipped and you have skipped your regular dental cleanings, bacterial plaque and tarter can build up on your teeth. The plaque and tarter, if left untreated, may eventually cause irreparable damage to your jawbone and supporting structures, and could lead to tooth loss.

Gum disease can lead to heart disease if left untreated. “Your gums are very vascular, meaning they’re going to get bacteria in your bloodstream, which can go anywhere and trigger inflammation throughout the body.” Dr. Rice says ”Inflammation is one of the main things that cause damage to blood vessels, including those of the heart, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke”. She also states the bacteria can travel to artificial joints and cause infection.

**Oral Cancer**—According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, men over the age of 40 have the greatest risk for oral cancer. About approximately 43,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer of the mouth, tongue or throat area, and the ACS estimates that about 7,000 people will die from these cancers. The use of tobacco products and alcohol increased the risk of oral cancer. Most oral cancers are first diagnosed by the dentist during a routine checkup.

**Dental fillings break down**—fillings have a life expectancy of 8 to 10 years. However, they can last 20 years or longer. When the filings in your mouth start to break down, food and bacteria can get underneath them and can cause decay deep in the tooth. Replacing them will prevent further expensive dental procedures down the road.

Establishing an oral health routine is important for a healthy mouth. Also having routine dental appointments with **Dr. Andrea Rice** with **Rice Family** **Dentistry** will help keep your smile healthy. Call today (620) 221-7737