

Power **UP** kids

THE BEST TIME TO TRAIN FUTURE ADULT PATIENTS ON POWER TOOTHBRUSHES IS WHEN THEY ARE YOUNG, RIGHT?

BY **TRICIA OSUNA**, RDH, BSDH, FAADH

Dental professionals are known for how much we give to our patients. Dentistry is such a giving profession! Let's take a few minutes and think about what we can do to make our work life easier while improving the health of our patients. I know; we do that "improving" thing all day long. I meant we should make it easier down the road, educating our patients about their changing oral hygiene needs throughout their lifetimes.

When we look at the children we treat in our practices, I believe that we need to reconsider not only what we are doing for them now, but also what we want for them as adults.

So let's set up a master plan for their dental future! Children are very inquisitive about what dental professionals do and how we do it. I have had many children come in with parents to observe how I provide care and then play with various products in the office during their parents' treatment. Many of us have had this experience and encourage the behavior to show the support and education that we provide. While we

are sharing oral hygiene education, discussing nutrition and challenges related to oral and overall health with a parent, our future pediatric patients listen. As a result, we begin the process of "treating" and "educating" healthier future patients.

Many of us prefer and recommend that our adult patients use power toothbrushes. As a result, a great number of patients move away from manual brushing. When power brushing is recommended for the children of our adult patients, some of these same parents may push back, thinking these brushes are not necessary or an indulgence for their children.

But honestly, look at the research available and the cost of a power toothbrush such as the Sonicare For Kids 1.5. The overall benefit includes added compliance; studies show children aged 7 to 10 brushed significantly longer than with a manual toothbrush. In addition, the financial and health costs of gingival inflammation, potential decay, and restorative costs are substantial. Parents save money in the long run with a power toothbrush for children.

As children become proficient with power brushes, they also tend to prefer using them. I've had teen orthodontic patients ask their parents either to purchase an additional power brush so they can take it with them to school, or for permission to take the one from home to school daily. With access to multiple brush head sizes and power modes for children, we are able to bridge the gap from childhood oral hygiene to teen and adult by recommending power toothbrushes.

As patients reach their teens, periodontal disease becomes an issue for many of them. According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry's Facts and Figures 2014: *"Gum disease (also called periodontal disease or gingivitis) is not just a dental health risk, but also poses a risk to a teen's appearance. It affects six out of ten teenagers, causing red or swollen gums, bleeding gums or bad breath. The best prevention is brush-*

ing, flossing, and regular dental visits."

Education is key for all of our patients regardless of age. That "look good, feel good" behavior is not for adults only!

Power toothbrushes with built-in timers help motivate children to brush for a full two minutes. The AAPD states: "There is even a children's power toothbrush that is programmed to gradually increase kids' brushing time. It lets beginners brush for one minute. Then, gradually, over a period of about three months, it builds up to the recommended two minutes." A timer that signals with a beep (or even better, music!) every 30 seconds when it's time to move to the next part of the mouth encourages lifelong brushing habits. This added benefit is essential to reach the dental professional's recommended two-minute brushing duration.

Events such as National Brush Day, which comes after Halloween every year, are becoming well known and can

be your first "prep step" in a conversation about home care as well as nutrition. Thanks to you, as our patients age and become our adult patient population, they will already have incorporated power toothbrushes into their daily oral health regimen and realized the benefit of the investment. A dental master plan beginning with children will create a patient base of better educated, healthier adult clients while making your clinical experiences happier, healthier, and more rewarding! **RDH**

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