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DENTISTRY THROUGH THE AGES

Have you ever wondered how dental care evolved over the millennia to get to all of the procedures and technology we have at our fingertips today?

According to archaeological findings, for as long as dental problems have existed there have been efforts to provide treatment. In fact, skeletal remains dating as far back as 8000 BC show evidence of dental fillings. While diseases of the teeth, as well as dental remedies, are mentioned in early Sumerian writing, the first reference to a doctor who deals with the teeth comes from an Egyptian text circa 2700 BC. Over two thousand years later in Greece, Aristotle and Hippocrates described the eruption of teeth and the treatment of various dental problems. And, around 100 BC the Roman medical writer, Celsus wrote about oral hygiene practices and addressed the stabilization of loose teeth, teething, toothaches, and jaw fractures.

During the middle ages, the Europeans are more aware of the importance of clean teeth and even use various concoctions to whiten their smiles. At this time, a barber-surgeon besides just cutting hair also treats teeth, addressing

any dental problems you can't solve with a home remedy! Around this same time, the Chinese invent a bristle toothbrush, similar to what we use today.

In 1723, the era of modern dentistry began as a French surgeon, named Pierre Fauchard, publishes a book on the practice of dentistry. From this point forward, the field of dentistry takes off, and the first “real” dentists start to appear in Europe and colonial America. Over the course of the next hundred years, advances in care include the manufacturing of porcelain teeth, the invention of the dental chair, a foot-treadle engine to power a dental drill gets patented, gold and silver fillings arrive on the scene, and a dentist demonstrates the use of ether anesthesia. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the practice of dentistry is established as a profession in the United States, the world's first dental society is founded, and a dental school opens in Maryland.

With all of these developments in dentistry, new companies become interested in the value of selling oral care products. In 1873, Colgate introduced the first commercially

prepared toothpaste. A few years later, dental floss is manufactured for wide-spread distribution and sale.

In the 20th century, there's an explosion of research, innovation, and discovery. Enormous strides in the provision of care, the ranges of procedures and technology make dental treatment a more exact science and dental specialties emerge. Patients in the 20th Century receive Novocaine to numb the tooth and jaw for dental procedures as well as have x-rays taken to aid in diagnosis. Techniques and materials for fillings, crowns, bridges, and dentures evolve, nylon-bristled toothbrushes appear, and the era of water fluoridation to reduce the risk of tooth decay begins. During the second half of the 20th century, dental lasers, implants, and tooth-colored filling materials are developed. The art and science of cosmetic dentistry evolve at a rapid pace, and new procedures such as teeth whitening and veneers become popular.

Thanks to a long line of pioneers in the field of dentistry and all of the rapid advances in care, dentists in the 21st century can treat every type of oral health issue with greater efficiency, precision, ease, and comfort. Today, dental patients have the best options in care to maintain optimal oral health as well as access to advanced, innovative solutions to improve the look and function of their smiles.