



## In the Dentist's Office

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— Dr. Nathan Fletcher

**If a tooth is bad, take it out. Dentists cause pain. Visit the dentist only when a tooth hurts.**

These are the myths that Drs. Nathan Fletcher and Alison Riddle-Fletcher have made their mission to prove false. To do so, they have come up with some unique ways to raise their patients’ dental IQs.

In their private practice at Fletcher & Fletcher Family Dentistry in Gwynn Oak, Maryland, patients are advised to time their daily brushing routine with an egg timer to ensure that they are spending the proper amount of time brushing their teeth.

The husband-wife team also offers in their office culturally competent resource materials on dental health. Children get packets containing coloring books, and brushing

and flossing picture sheets. The Fletchers tell parents to watch their children brush to make sure it is done correctly. They also ask all patients to show them proper brushing and flossing techniques to make sure they have understood their oral care instructions.

“The big picture is raising people’s dental IQs to a level where they take better care of themselves and then pass along information to others,” says Fletcher. “The result is an increase in overall health literacy.”

The Fletchers try to teach patients and the public why it is important to see the dentist regularly. They also stress the link between dental problems and overall health.

“Many people don’t know that poor oral health is tied to heart disease, diabetes, obesity and infections,” says Fletcher. “When we speak with patients, we always

explain how their oral health affects — or will affect — their general health.”

When they are not in the office, the Fletchers are educating the community. They, along with a puppet who helps ease kids’ fear of dentists, speak at health fairs and in schools.

The Fletchers find that many people fear the dentist and pass that fear to their children. Some choose to have a tooth removed over having a root canal to save the tooth. Others have tried home remedies that have made their teeth worse. Many seek advice from friends and relatives on what they should do about their dental problems.

“Patients are so afraid of coming in,” says Riddle-Fletcher, who also is a public health dentist with the Baltimore City Health Department. “But what they do

at home — or simply waiting — causes more harm. When they finally get here, they’re in so much pain that it becomes a bad experience.”

Fletcher, who became president of the National Dental Association this year, also is working with corporate community outreach programs to provide dental education and screenings to elementary school-age children in underserved areas nationwide.

“Unfortunately, many schools don’t provide oral health education, because funding has been cut so much,” says Fletcher. “But it needs to be a priority in schools. With these students and with our patients, we hope to effect change not only in attitudes but also in habits.”

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>1</b> 1968: Henry Lewis becomes first black musical director of an American symphony orchestra — New Jersey Symphony.	<b>2</b> 1971: Samuel L. Gravelly Jr. becomes first African American admiral in U.S. Navy.	<b>3</b> 1890: L.H. Jones patents corn harvester. 1904: Charles R. Drew, who developed process for preserving blood plasma, born.	<b>4</b> 1967: Bill Cosby receives an Emmy Award for his work in the television series / <i>Spy</i> . 1972: Activist Angela Davis acquitted of all murder and conspiracy charges.	<b>5</b> 1987: Dr. Mae C. Jemison becomes first African American woman astronaut.	<b>6</b> 1831: First annual People of Color convention held in Philadelphia.	<b>7</b> 1917: Poetess Gwendolyn Brooks, first black to win the Pulitzer Prize (poetry, 1950), born.
<b>8</b> 1953: Supreme Court ruling bans discrimination in Washington, D.C., restaurants.	<b>9</b> 1962: W.W. Braithwaite, poet, anthropologist and literary critic, dies in New York City. 1995: Lincoln J. Ragsdale, pioneer fighter pilot of World War II, dies.	<b>10</b> 1854: James Augustine Healy, first black Roman Catholic bishop, ordained a priest in Notre Dame Cathedral.	<b>11</b> 1964: Nelson Mandela sentenced to life imprisonment by South African government.	<b>12</b> 1963: Medgar W. Evers, civil rights leader, assassinated in Jackson, Mississippi.	<b>13</b> 1967: Thurgood Marshall nominated to Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson.	<b>14</b> <b>Flag Day</b> 1864: Congress rules equal pay for all soldiers. 1927: George Washington Carver patents process of producing paints and stains.
<b>15</b> <b>Father's Day</b> 1913: Dr. Effie O'Neal Ellis, first black woman to hold an executive position in the American Medical Association, born.	<b>16</b> 1970: Kenneth A. Gibson elected mayor of Newark, New Jersey, first African American mayor of a major Eastern city.	<b>17</b> 1775: Minuteman Peter Salem fights in the Battle of Bunker Hill.	<b>18</b> 1942: Harvard University medical student Bernard Whitfield Robinson commissioned as the Navy's first black officer.	<b>19</b> 1865: Blacks in Texas are notified of Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863. "Juneteenth" marks the event.	<b>20</b> 1953: Albert W. Dent of Dillard University elected president of the National Health Council.	<b>21</b> 1945: Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. becomes first black to command an Army Air Corps base.
<b>22</b> 1897: William Barry patents postmarking and cancelling machine.	<b>23</b> 1940: Sprinter Wilma Rudolph, winner of three gold medals at 1960 Summer Olympics, born.	<b>24</b> 1964: Carl T. Rowan appointed director of the United States Information Agency.	<b>25</b> 1941: Franklin D. Roosevelt issues executive order establishing Fair Employment Practices Commission.	<b>26</b> 1975: Dr. Samuel Blanton Rosser becomes first African American certified in pediatric surgery.	<b>27</b> 1991: Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall announces his retirement.	<b>28</b> 1864: Fugitive slave laws repealed by Congress. 1911: Samuel J. Battle becomes first black policeman in New York City.
<b>29</b> 1886: Photographer James Van Der Zee born. 2006: Lloyd Richards, theater pioneer and Tony award winner for direction of <i>Fences</i> , dies on his 87th birthday.	<b>30</b> 1921: Charles S. Gilpin awarded Spingarn Medal for his performance in Eugene O'Neill's <i>Emperor Jones</i> .					

### Fact Number 6

Oral health is an essential and integral component of health throughout life.