

INTRO:

Doug Crookston & Jaclyn Sykes here today and we want to welcome you to another episode of the Hygiene Profit Leaders Podcast. We are both Dental Hygienists and are Clinical Trainers here at the Scheduling Institute. Between the two of us, we have been into close to 1000 different offices all over the world. So, we hear and see a LOT – especially when it comes to the concept of exercise and dental hygiene. Today, we will be talking a lot about this – and the idea of us really needing to incorporate very specific exercise and stretches into our day to day to extend the longevity of our hygiene careers.

Fellow hygienists – if you didn't know how important exercise was before you became a dental hygienist, you do now, right? How many times have you had back pain, neck pain, hand/wrist pain, etc. at the end of a long day of patient care? If you're like Doug & I, the answer is too many days to count!

Most hygienists only practice, on average, 7 – 10 years.

80% of hygienists complain of some kind of work-related pain within the first year of being a hygienist.

In order to perform the tasks associated with our role, our arms must have a stable base from which to operate. This requires our shoulder stabilizing muscles to have great endurance. However, these muscles tend to fatigue quickly with forward head, rounded upper back and elevated arm postures – umm hello, doesn't that sound like what we do all day?? When these muscles fatigue, other muscles must compensate – and become overworked and tight.

Dental Hygienists and other dental professionals actually require specific exercise. Not only that, but dental professionals should actually target specific muscle groups with muscular endurance training. When it comes to exercise, dental professionals should look to the evidence. We are prone to painful muscle imbalances which can be exacerbated by exercises that are not a problem for the general public. This is why exercise regimens like P90X, Pilates, Yoga, & Crossfit need to be modified to remove those harmful exercises that can throw you into the vicious pain cycle.

With all that said, Hygienists should avoid exercises like the vertical row, deltoid lifts (where you hold the weights and make a "T" with your arms, the superman exercise (hate those anyway!). Strengthening the core is key!

The best type of exercise for us is Yoga, barre and spin. In addition to reducing lower back pain, arthritis, headaches and carpal tunnel syndrome, these exercises are low impact, promote relaxation for both the mind and body, and strengthen your core, arms, glutes, back and legs. Our role demands a significant amount of mental and physical energy.

We want to share some simple exercises and stretches that you can do every day in your office or home – for those days when you just don't have the time to do an hour of yoga or spin. Wall slides, chest stretches, hip flexor stretches, thoracic extensions, planks, double knee raises, etc. By staying consistent with these exercises, you can maintain a good posture and strength your abdominal muscles to help avoid discomfort in the lower back and neck.

Last but not least, evaluate your dental chair and propose a new chair if needed – and/or invest in yourself if the answer is no! Consider a dental chair with back support for times where you are talking to the patient, helping them with paperwork, or doing chart notes. Every little bit counts.

It's been great talking with you all today – we look forward to seeing you on another episode of the Hygiene Profit Leaders!.