



**W**elcome to our practice newsletter. Thanks to those of you who have commented on previous newsletters - we are glad you are reading them. We hope to be able to provide you with information on a variety of topics to supplement the advice we give when you visit the practice. As always, we would appreciate feedback from you and don't forget to ask if you have any questions on the articles.

## Hygiene Matters

**G**um disease is so common that 49% of adults with some natural teeth have moderately severe gum (periodontal) disease. In its most advanced stages it can cause tooth loss and it can often go unnoticed until teeth become loose. However, in most instances it is preventable or controllable.

Bacteria that are in your mouth form a thin film on tooth surfaces called plaque. This is what causes your teeth to feel "furry" when they are in need of a brush. Excessive plaque build-up can lead to inflammation of your gums and when this occurs it is termed gingivitis. With gingivitis your gums become red, swollen and bleed on brushing or flossing. This is usually a reversible state and improves with good oral hygiene.

If gingivitis progresses it becomes periodontitis. The bacteria in plaque and tartar (hard calcified deposits) produce chemicals (toxins) that inflame the gums causing a breakdown of the tissues and bone that support your teeth. Bone loss may cause the teeth to feel loose, drift out of position and can ultimately lead to tooth loss.

Some of us are more susceptible to periodontal disease and there are probably several reasons for this. Susceptibility may be genetic and sadly we cannot change that. Another major factor is smoking and stopping would certainly help people to keep their teeth longer. Other factors include high stress levels, poor general health and a poor diet. A disease can be seen as an imbalance between the body and its ability to cope with the stress placed upon it and

periodontal disease is no different. Addressing the factors mentioned above may help improve your periodontal health. Not only is it important to prevent and treat periodontal disease in order to keep your teeth for life, it could also be important for your general health. A lot of research is progressing in this area and some links between periodontal problems and general health have already been investigated. For example, there is some evidence that pregnant mothers with periodontal disease are 4-7 times more likely to give birth to pre-term or low birth weight babies. Diabetics are more likely to suffer periodontal disease, especially if their diabetes is not well controlled. Having periodontal disease may also make it more difficult for a diabetic to control their blood sugar levels. A link has also been established between periodontal disease and heart disease. Although much is still to be learnt, it is thought that people with periodontal disease may be at more risk of heart disease.

To reduce periodontal disease, people need to try to cut down any risk factors. Attending a dentist regularly will allow for any problems to be spotted and addressed. We can (and will) advise you on the best way to clean your teeth to keep the levels of plaque and tartar to a minimum. Most people do find it difficult to clean their teeth effectively.

You may be referred to see me, the practice hygienist, for a professional cleaning. This involves the removal of plaque and tartar from your teeth so that your gums become healthier. I

am trained to assist in the prevention and treatment of periodontal disease. Please don't feel embarrassed if you haven't seen a hygienist before or in a long time. Do ask if you have any concerns about your gum health or are having difficulty cleaning your teeth.

It is common to be advised to see a hygienist on a three monthly basis if there are any problems with your gums or oral hygiene. There are studies that demonstrate it can take three months before bacteria re-establish themselves at a hazardous level, following professional cleaning, in people who are susceptible to periodontal disease. In people who can maintain their plaque levels or who appear less susceptible to disease, recall periods may be anywhere from six to 12 months. It is really important to try to attend as often as you are recommended in order for us to treat your periodontal problems, slow the progression of any disease and hopefully help you maintain your teeth.

*Donna*

### PRACTICE HOURS

**Mon** 09.00 - 17.30

**Tues** 10.00 - 19.00

**Wed** 09.00 - 17.30

**Thur** 09.00 - 17.30

**Fri** 09.00 - 17.00

Japanese dentists have developed a paste that could be used to repair early decay in tooth enamel. It also helps prevent further decay in the same area. This could eventually lead to a large reduction in the amount of teeth needing restoration.

## Conference Call

Every May the British Dental Association holds its annual conference. This year it was staged in Glasgow, at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre. Five of the team travelled south to spend three days listening to lectures and visiting the trade exhibition. There were lectures available for all members of the team. Topics included stress management, the latest updates on infection control within the dental environment, materials and cosmetic solutions for dental problems and these were delivered by a selection of national and international speakers.

It is already compulsory for dentists to complete a set number of hours of study each year and they must include a combination of lectures and reading. However, soon this will also be the case for hygienists and nurses. Attending conferences, such as Glasgow, will be one of the means that the team at Hilton Street will be expecting to maintain their knowledge of what is going on within the world of dental care.

As well as the more academic element of the conference, an excellent trade show kept everyone entertained between lectures. Some of us had the chance to try the latest mouthwashes, sonic toothbrushes and other more peculiar oral hygiene aids. If we feel any of these might give you an advantage in maintaining your oral health you can bet we will be recommending them.

Those attending regular examinations rose from 40% in 1968 to 59% in 1998.



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

## Donna's Audit

To help the practice monitor the use of our hygiene services, the hygiene advice we give and your periodontal (gum) health, Donna audits a selection of record cards every year. Taking a randomly selected 200 cards Donna reviews attendance rates and bleeding scores. Many of you will know bleeding levels are a good indication of periodontal health.

It was encouraging to see that almost every one who is advised to visit the hygienist is doing so, although there is always room for improvement. 24 out of the 200 people reviewed this year did not need to see the hygienist as they were doing such a great job with their brushing and flossing at home - keep up the good work. The majority of the remaining people see Donna every three to six months.

Of the bleeding scores reviewed, 42% showed an improvement. That is, there was a reduction in any bleeding from your gums when they were examined. This usually indicates improved periodontal health, most often due to good oral hygiene and regular attendance. The 2003 audit only saw 30% of bleeding scores improving - well done.

2/3 of all the records reviewed had bleeding scores of 10% or less. That means these people were able to maintain 90% of areas free from inflammation. We feel this is good, however, we'd like to see this level increase next year and will work with you all to try and achieve this.

*Jonathan.*

*(Thanks to Donna for the Auditing)*

## FEEDBACK

We are all proud of our work and strive to continue offering high quality treatment and advice.

However, like any other organisation, we cannot be perfect all the time and if you feel we have let you down in any way, please let us know and we will do our best to try to resolve the situation.

We are always open to suggestions and constructive criticism and would be pleased to hear from you.



## The Toothbrush

The year is 1780 and William Addis is a resident of the debtor's prison in London. Using the thigh bone of a cow and attaching cow hair bristles into holes he had bored into one end, William Addis is thought to have invented the precursor of the modern toothbrush. Although the Chinese had already produced a similar device, toothpaste had been made way back in 500BC and prehistoric teeth demonstrated signs of toothpick and dental floss grooves, Addis is credited with the first mass produced toothbrush. After leaving prison, Addis started a company making these specialist brushes. The company later became Wisdom Toothbrushes Ltd and eventually boar hair replaced the cow hair. In 1938 nylon became available and replaced the boar hair as a more hygienic substitute.



Denplan

People who brush their teeth more often stay slimmer, according to a recent study. Those who stayed slim tended to brush after every meal. The authors felt this was a sign that these people were more careful about their health - not that tooth brushing counts as a fat burning exercise.

*Newsletter Compiled & Edited By The Team*