

blue court smiles



issue 5

Welcome to the latest issue of our patient newsletter.

Smile Makeovers: Having a great smile boosts your confidence and can help you to feel happy and healthy. Your smile is the first thing that people notice and a beautiful smile creates a great first impression.

Here at The Blue Court Dental Centre we can offer a range of the very latest treatments to enhance your smile, from simple solutions for small imperfections to full smile makeovers.

Many of you are aware of tooth whitening; a popular, simple and quick way to enhance your smile.

We are also able to offer solutions to align and reshape teeth, close unsightly gaps, replace missing teeth and replace metal fillings with natural-looking restorations.

As well as treatments for your teeth we also offer facial rejuvenation treatments such as Botox™ and Restylane™.

Nishan Dixit is a member of the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry; which demonstrates his clinical excellence through continuing professional development

An Easy Way to Pay: If you are looking for a more convenient way to pay for any dental treatments, please ask us for details of our dental loan schemes.

If you have any friends, family or neighbours who may be interested in receiving the same kind of quality care, please do let us know. We are always delighted to welcome new patients.



Water is our life's blood. A large proportion of our body weight is made up of it and we need plenty of it each day to keep us fit and healthy. Even the sight or sound of water has a positive effect on us – a picture of a ripple on a lake, or the sound of waves lapping lazily on the shore can have a relaxing effect on virtually all of us.

No doubt you will be aware of the advice health experts give us to drink six to seven glasses of water each day. This is because 50-70% of our body weight is made up of water and we need to keep those levels topped up.

But did you know that water can also hugely benefit the health of your teeth and gums?

For example, it is completely safe for your teeth - most other drinks can damage them. If they contain sugar, they contribute to tooth decay, especially if you drink them frequently throughout the day.

One of the other dangers to teeth from drinks is that of tooth erosion. This is where the acidity of a drink acts directly on the enamel, the hard outer layer of your tooth, and eats away at it. Over time, the enamel dissolves, revealing the darker dentine underneath and making your teeth more susceptible to chipping, sensitivity and pain.

Many drinks can cause dental erosion, including fruit juices, squashes, fruit teas and flavoured waters, with the worst culprits being fizzy drinks. To help keep your teeth in top condition, try to stick to water as often as you can.

Another benefit water has on teeth is that of keeping your mouth moist. Your saliva performs many different tasks, including neutralising harmful acids, forming a protective barrier on the enamel, helping to wash away food remnants, bacteria and plaque, and keeping our tongue, mouth and throat lubricated.

But saliva flow can decrease as we grow older, or if we become dehydrated, or as a side-effect of some medications, which means the vital tasks your saliva performs are affected. This can lead to discomfort, and in the long-term can cause extensive tooth decay and higher levels of dental erosion. Taking regular sips of water throughout the day can help prevent your mouth from becoming dry, alleviating potential problems.

If you regularly suffer from a dry mouth, or would like to know more about dental erosion, please talk to us next time you visit – we'll be happy to help.

If you've got a sweet tooth, the chances are you are struggling between wanting to indulge it and not wanting to ruin your teeth.

Indulging your sweet tooth without damaging your teeth

But if the UK's leading dental charity has anything to do with it, you won't have to struggle for much longer – you'll be able to reach for sweetly satisfying, sugar-free treats.

There are already a few sugar-free sweets on the UK market, as well as many sugar-free chewing gums.

Although we are traditionally the largest sugar confectionery consumers in Europe, with most of the leading manufacturers based here, the amount of sugar-free sweets is tiny – just 6% compared with 60% in Spain.

The British Dental Health Foundation hopes to improve these figures, and is in talks with all the UK's leading confectionery manufacturers and other sugar-free companies with a view to bringing more tooth-friendly products to our shops.

But even if your favourite treat is loaded with sugar, you can still minimise the danger it poses to your teeth. This is because it is the frequency of sugar intake that is vital, not the amount. So several jellies, toffees, mints or even fruits eaten between meals throughout the day are worse for your teeth than, say, a Mars bar eaten with lunch.

The reason for this is that the bacteria in your mouth react with the sugar, causing acids which then lead to decay. Your saliva will wash away and neutralise harmful sugars and acids but it takes around 40 minutes to do this. If you are constantly nibbling or drinking sugary foods the saliva is unable to keep up, resulting in tooth decay.

If your weakness is for frequent drinks throughout the day, try to drink water wherever possible.

Many drinks, including flavoured waters, fruit juices, squash and fizzy pop, are acidic and will cause dental erosion, where the surface of your teeth is softened and worn away.

So if you must eat or drink sweet stuff, either ensure it is sugar free (low sugar or no added sugar still contains sugar), or indulge less often – at, or immediately after, mealtimes is ideal. You can also chew sugar-free gum after eating or drinking to help boost saliva production and prevent decay.



If you would like to know more, please ask during your next visit.



Unveiling the mystery of the dental examination

Coming for a dental examination can seem like visiting somewhere foreign at times, in that you hardly understand a word of what is said.

What on earth is the dentist saying to the nurse about your teeth? What's with all the numbers? And how can your teeth possibly have pockets – surely you must have misheard?

The language used is, it has to be said, somewhat out of the ordinary for anyone who is not connected with dentistry. So we thought it was time we removed some of the mystery and explained to you some of the phrases we use.

The numbers that are so often used simply identify each individual tooth. We make a chart of your teeth so we can keep track of what is happening inside your mouth, and what needs to be done.

If a tooth needs filling, we need to enter that on the chart too. The name we use for it depends on which surface(s) of the tooth are involved. These names include mesial (furthest front), distal (furthest back), and buccal (next to the cheek). We may abbreviate these, especially if more than one surface is affected.

During your examination, we will also check for gum disease. One of the indicators of gum disease is that the gums start to separate from the teeth and form pockets. The depth of these pockets gives an indication of how severe the gum disease is. Generally, the pockets should be 3mm or less and anything over that indicates that the health of your gums needs to be improved, largely by following a good oral healthcare routine at home.

If you have any queries during your examination, do ask – we'll be happy to help you.

Want to feel more confident?

Feeling confident has always been high on the wish-list for most people. Centuries ago Cleopatra bathed in milk to keep herself looking and feeling good, these days there is a vast range of beauty products available to achieve the same aims.

But did you know that having a course of dental treatment can give your confidence a huge boost, and quite possibly take years off your looks at the same time?

Age has a number of effects on our teeth, gums and surrounding bone structure, which inevitably affect the way we look and, as a result, sap our confidence.

Perhaps the easiest to fix is the colour of our teeth. As we get older, our teeth naturally become darker, and this is made worse by staining caused by red wine, tea, coffee and smoking.

Tooth whitening reverses these effects, leaving you with a brighter, whiter smile that will make you look younger.

Over the years, our teeth can become worn down, which means that they no longer provide the same support for the lips and skin immediately surrounding them. Consequently the skin sags and wrinkles, and the lips begin to pucker inwards.

Lost teeth can have an even greater impact on our looks. Once a tooth is lost, the bone surrounding the root area starts to shrink away. The more teeth that are lost, the more bone is lost, and the effect on your face is a sucked-in appearance around your mouth and cheeks and associated skin sagging and wrinkling.



Visit your dentist!

Other problems associated with age include crooked teeth. Our teeth tend to move around gradually within our mouths, and some people find that they gradually become more and more crooked.

Fortunately all these effects can easily be remedied. Dental implants are permanent, natural-looking replacements for missing teeth that are anchored into your jaw bone, which means the bone does not have the same tendency to shrink away.

Worn down teeth can be ageing and unsightly, but can benefit from a number of treatments. These include veneers, which are very thin porcelain layers which are bonded to your teeth

and can transform your smile, and bonding, where tooth coloured filling material is adhered to your teeth and shaped to give a natural appearance.

Crooked teeth can be straightened - you may be suitable for a course of adult orthodontics (tooth straightening), or there may be other ways in which we can even out their appearance.

The effects of these treatments can have an astonishing effect on your looks, and unlike facelifts do not need you to hibernate for several weeks while you recover.

If you would like to know more about how we can enhance your appearance, please ask next time you visit, or call to arrange a no-obligation consultation.



Vital facts your dentist needs to know

Patients often ask us why we need to know about their medical conditions and what medication they are taking. The short answer is that it is vital to keep us up to date with your medical history so we can treat you appropriately and safely.

We need to know about any regular medications you take, including inhalers and the contraceptive pill. You should also tell us if you have taken any other medication recently, including over the counter ones or recreational drugs.

This will help avoid any potential problems. For example, some antibiotics can make the contraceptive pill less effective, so we can remind you to take extra precautions for a while.

It also helps us to understand any signs and symptoms seen in your mouth, and to help you with any side effects caused by your medication, such as a dry mouth and ulceration.

We need to know about your general health too. If you suffer from a heart condition, we may need to give you antibiotics an hour before certain dental treatments to prevent infection.

If you are pregnant the change in hormone levels can affect your gums, and we will need to keep an extra close eye on them.

In some cases, we may spot symptoms of illnesses that you were previously unaware of, as early signs of oral cancer and other conditions can be detected. In such instances, we would let you know so you can see your doctor.

Why our smiles are so much healthier today



There's no doubt about it, generally our mouths are much healthier than they used to be. Twenty years ago we visited dentists less often, had fewer teeth and cleaned those we had less often.

The trend towards a healthier smile looks set to continue too, especially as preventive dentistry now plays such a key role in modern dental care.

Statistics for the UK's oral healthcare show that the proportion of adults who had lost all their teeth was 37% in 1968. Thirty years later, this figure had more than halved, and experts predict it will be down to 10% by 2008.

In 1983, less than half of us (48%) went for regular examinations – by 2003 61% of us were regular visitors at a dental practice. We clean

our teeth more - generally using fluoride toothpaste - sales of products such as dental floss and mouthwash have soared, and we are keener to keep as many of our natural teeth as possible.

Add to this the continuing boom in cosmetic dentistry and it is clear that having a great smile is far more important to us now than it has ever been.

So why are we more smile conscious? Some of our change in attitude could be attributed to the celebrity influence – we are increasingly likely to follow their lead and because they tend to have perfect smiles we want them too.

A lot of it has to do with health education too. Modern dentists, particularly those in private practices, now focus strongly on preventive dentistry to help avoid problems, with hygiene treatment an essential part of routine dental care.

A key part of preventive dentistry is helping patients to know how best to care for their teeth, from cleaning them thoroughly to following a healthy diet and not smoking, and so good oral healthcare becomes part of patients' daily routines. This patient newsletter is just one of the ways in which we do this.

Whatever the reasons – and there are many more – it can only be good news for the nation's smiles!

If you would like to know more about how to keep your smile healthy and happy, please speak to us during your next visit.

"I regularly suffer from cold sores around my mouth. They make me feel self-conscious and are quite uncomfortable. How can I stop them from appearing?"

Questions & Answers

"I have a friend who needs dental care but she is worried that she will not be able to find a dentist with space on their list. Would you be able to help her?"

Cold sores are caused by a virus called Herpes Simplex, which is caught by close contact – usually kissing – with someone who already has the virus. It is very common – around six out of ten people carry it. Some carriers suffer from cold sores very rarely, others get them regularly. The sores themselves can be itchy and painful and many people find them embarrassing because they can be very noticeable. The good news is that you can help prevent them from occurring. Common reasons for the virus reactivating are tiredness, illness, stress, being run down, and bright sunlight, so try to identify your trigger and then avoid it. Make sure you get enough sleep and have a healthy diet, take multi-vitamins and use a sunblock or lip balm with UV protection. If you do get a cold sore, keep the area soft and moist with petroleum jelly. Tea tree oil can help, but the best treatment is an anti-viral cream, available from chemists. Keep some handy so you can put it on as soon as you feel that tell-tale tingle.

Media headlines often suggest that dentists are no longer taking on new patients, but your friend doesn't need to worry - we would be happy to see them. We love getting referrals from our patients – it shows that they are pleased with the dental care and service we offer them. So yes, if you know of anyone who would like to receive the same quality of dental care that you do, we'll be delighted to welcome them to our practice.

