

blue court smiles

Issue 8

Better than ever!

As you are probably aware, we like to do all we can to keep improving the services we offer to our patients, from the quality of our dental care to those added little extras that can make such a huge difference to your dental experience.

This includes our patient newsletter – and so we are delighted to tell you that we think this latest issue is our best yet! We look at what makes a “perfect” smile, guide you through the confusing choice of mouthwashes, and much more.

New receptionist

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce our other receptionist. Gita joined the team in April 2006 and we are very pleased to have her with us. She has already met lots of patients and is looking forward to meeting more of you soon.

We really appreciate your continued support. We are always pleased to see new patients, so if you have any friends, family or neighbours who may be interested in joining our practice, please let us know.

Healthy diet, healthy mouth

When it comes to following a healthy diet, many of us know that the old saying “we are what we eat” is very true.

But did you know that your diet is also reflected in your smile? A diet filled with frequent sugary snacks and drinks can have a devastating effect on your teeth and gums, whereas **a healthy diet can help you keep your teeth for life.**

In fact, dental health experts believe that this message is so important that they have recently devoted a whole month to it – National Smile Month, run by the British Dental Health Foundation.

Chief Executive Dr Nigel Carter says “The importance of a healthy diet cannot be underestimated, as an unhealthy diet can cause a wide variety of problems including tooth loss, dental erosion and decay.”

To help keep your teeth healthy, it is advised that you eat only three or four times a day, avoiding the temptation to snack in between – and if you must snack, then choose something that has minimal amounts of sugar in it, such as cheese, raw vegetables or breadsticks.

This is because every time you eat or drink something sugary, your teeth undergo an attack from acids caused by the sugar reacting with the bacteria in your mouth. If these attacks happen too often, your teeth can suffer decay.



In addition, you should avoid acidic or fizzy drinks, as these can cause tooth erosion, where the hard outer coating (enamel) of your teeth is gradually worn away by repeated acid attacks.

Gum health is vital too. Research has linked gum disease with a number of conditions including heart disease, diabetes and premature births, and is one of the biggest causes of tooth loss among adults in the UK. A diet rich in vitamins, minerals and fresh produce can help to prevent it, together with a good daily oral healthcare routine.

For more information on how to keep your smile healthy, please ask – we'll be happy to help.

Ouch!

Most of us would like to think that we take proper care of our teeth and gums each day, but a new survey has shown that at least half of the population is probably doing something wrong!

Astonishingly, one in six people risk damaging their teeth and gums by using a variety of completely unsuitable tools to remove food that is trapped between their teeth, including screwdrivers, earrings, needles, keys and paper clips!



In addition, half of those surveyed do not know how to brush properly, don't clean between their teeth regularly, and never remove odour-causing bacteria from their tongues!

The National Dental Health Survey, conducted by oral health charity The British Dental Health Foundation, also found that some people don't bother to remove food stuck between their teeth, increasing the chances of suffering from bad breath, gum disease and decay.

The best item to dislodge food from between teeth, according to the Foundation is interdental wood sticks, which are shaped specifically for this purpose. Cocktail sticks may seem similar, but are not and should be avoided.

As dentists, we believe that some of the problem is down to embarrassment. After all, if you are a responsible adult, you may feel slightly silly asking for advice on how to clean your teeth properly.

And even though we can advise you on what to do in our newsletters, it is no substitute for talking to you about it and showing you which methods are best suited to you and your teeth.

If you are not sure whether your oral health care routine is as good as it could be, please don't be embarrassed – speak to us about it. We are used to advising people on such matters, and will be happy to help.

Safety first

Joe Jordan, Nobby Stiles and Paul Maddocks all have one thing in common other than their love of sport – they are also famous for having had their teeth damaged on the pitch.

Joe Jordan, former Liverpool and Scotland player, was particularly famous for this – he had his two front teeth knocked out whilst playing football, and would remove his denture before each match.

Unfortunately, sporting injuries like this are all too common, which is why we regularly urge our sporting patients to wear custom-made mouthguards to help protect their teeth.

Contact sports or those which involve moving objects carry the biggest risk. Examples include rugby, football, hockey, cricket, squash and martial arts, which can lead to broken or dislodged teeth, and broken or dislocated jaws.

We make the mouthguards by taking an accurate impression of your mouth, which is then used to provide a comfortable and snug-fitting mouthguard which will offer you the maximum protection.

There are cheaper kits available from sports shops,

but we strongly advise against using them – they can fit badly, be bulky and uncomfortable to wear, can fall out during matches and can even cause choking.



It is far better to invest in a tailor-made mouthguard, particularly when you consider the potential cost and inconvenience of dealing with a dental injury.

For more information on how sports mouthguards can help to protect your teeth, please ask, we'll be happy to advise you.

Did you Know?

George Washington's dentures were apparently made from walrus, hippopotamus, and cows' teeth and elephant tusks.

What makes a perfect smile?

The cosmetic dentistry boom is showing no signs of slowing down, with an ever increasing number of our patients wanting to enhance their smile in some way. But is there such thing as a perfect smile, and how do you know whether yours is perfect or not?



Firstly, we'd like to say that a smile doesn't have to be perfect for you to be happy with it. Lots of people like the little quirks and characteristics of their own smile – Madonna, for example, is said to like the slight gap in her front teeth and to have no intention of changing it.

But for people who feel they would like their smile enhanced, there are certain key considerations which we take into account when planning their treatment.

The first has to be the expectations of the patient. **Our patients are increasingly opting for a more natural look rather than the completely perfect Hollywood smile** – one which features realistic looking teeth with a certain translucency to them, and which is not unnaturally white.

Obviously we will look closely at your teeth, checking to see how straight they are, looking for cracks, chips and gaps, checking the size of them and seeing if they need to be brighter or whiter.

We also look at your smile as a whole, as part of your face. We check that it is correctly aligned and in proportion to the rest of your face.

We examine the way your teeth meet together and the support they provide for your lips – this is vital, and can make a huge difference to the way you look.

Your smile plays a key role in the way you look and feel, which is why we take so much trouble to ensure that it looks great.

For more information on how we can help enhance your smile, please arrange a no-obligation consultation.

Mouthwash matters

Look in any supermarket and you'll find many brands of mouthwash, offering to keep your breath sparkling fresh for hours and your teeth in top condition. But are they really as good as they seem?

Most are excellent at temporarily freshening the breath, and some can also help to remove some of the bacteria from your mouth. **But while they can certainly help you to maintain healthy teeth and gums, they are no substitute for good tooth brushing and inter-dental cleaning.**

If you need to use a mouthwash, we will always advise you of this and will also suggest which type to use.

Sufferers of chronic halitosis (bad breath) can benefit hugely from regular use of a particular type of mouthwash, which breaks down the odour-causing bacteria in the mouth, killing them off rather than simply masking them.

Some patients benefit from using fluoride mouthwashes, which offer greater protection against tooth decay and help to strengthen the hard outer coating (enamel) on your teeth.

Gum infections can be painful and can cause swollen or bleeding gums, which makes it difficult to clean around the affected area. In these cases we will suggest using an antibacterial mouthwash containing chlorhexidine.



We can also suggest mouthwashes to help alleviate soreness in the mouth, promote healing, and to help reduce tooth sensitivity.

If you have any questions about how best to care for your teeth, and whether using a mouthwash would be of benefit, please ask – we'll be happy to talk to you about it.

Did you Know?

Kissing a donkey was supposed to be a great way of relieving toothache, according to 'experts' in Germany in the Middle Ages.

Restoring your teeth while enhancing their appearance

Tooth restorations have come a long way in the past ten years or so. Modern techniques and materials mean we can restore even the most badly damaged teeth back to their former glory.

From crowns to fillings of various kinds, they can all be made strong, long-lasting and natural-looking again, enabling your mouth to function well while also helping your smile to look great.

We are all familiar with grey amalgam fillings, but for a more natural look, tooth-coloured composite material is now used. Thanks to modern techniques and the materials used, these are now long-lasting and can be matched to your own teeth so they are virtually invisible.

Sometimes we may offer you an inlay or onlay instead of a filling. An inlay sits inside a cavity in your tooth, while an onlay is a more substantial restoration, sitting on top of a tooth and providing shape.

These have several benefits over fillings – they are very strong, and can often look more realistic. They are particularly suitable for large repairs and the chewing surfaces of back teeth.

Onlays are specially made to fit your teeth, in much the same way that crowns are made, and are bonded to your teeth with special high strength resins.



Crowns are used when the top, visible part of the tooth has been badly damaged or is no longer strong enough to restore in any other way, but the root is still strong and healthy.

Today's crowns are long-lasting and realistic, and those used for visible front teeth are often created from porcelain to give a more natural look. Of course, each crown is carefully colour matched to your other teeth, and is intricately shaped to provide a perfect fit.

For more information about how we can help you to enhance and restore your smile, please ask during your next appointment.

Questions & Answers



I've heard that chewing gum after eating can help prevent fillings. Is this true, and if so how?

As long as it is sugar-free, yes, chewing gum can help maintain a healthy mouth. This is because it helps to boost saliva flow, helping to wash away food remnants, bacteria and plaque, neutralising harmful acids and so helping to reduce decay. According to gum manufacturers Wrigleys, 80% of dentists now recommend chewing sugar-free gum after meals.

My friend has seen several adverts offering cheap dentistry in other countries, and is now considering going abroad for his treatment. Is this advisable?

Having dental treatment abroad can sometimes appear very tempting, but we would question the actual savings made once the cost of flights and accommodation are taken into account. More importantly, what would your friend do if something went wrong afterwards? Would he have to go back, or pay to get it sorted out in the UK? Other factors to consider include the quality of materials used – for example all British laboratory work has to have a quality standard CE mark, this is not the case outside the EU. We would advise speaking to his own dentist first – your friend may be surprised at how affordable treatment in the UK can be, especially taking into account the range of payment options that many practices now offer.

