

# blue court smiles

Issue 3

## Welcome

to the latest issue of 'Blue Court Smiles'; our way of keeping in touch with our patients. We've been getting some great feedback from our previous issues and we think you'll enjoy this one even more.

In this issue we show how having a great smile can give your confidence a huge boost and even change your life. We explain why saliva plays a vital role in keeping our mouth healthy, and look at why drinking too many soft drinks can ruin your teeth. We also give practical advice on what to do if a tooth is accidentally knocked out.

### The Clinical Information Centre

We have recently invested in a state-of-the-art computer-based system which helps demonstrate treatment options with the aid of animations displayed on a screen. This system will help us to communicate various treatment options with you so that you can fully understand what each procedure involves.

**If you have any friends or family who may be interested in receiving the same kind of quality care, please do let us know. We are always pleased to welcome new patients and the best new patients are those that come as referrals from existing patients. Why not pass them a copy of 'Blue Court Smiles'?**



**Having a great smile not only boosts your confidence, it can also help you to be happy and healthy.**

*Smile - It's Good For You!*

Research has shown that smiling increases levels of the 'happy hormone' serotonin, which lifts your mood and can help to improve your health.

Smiling also releases endorphins, the body's natural pain relief hormones – many natural health advisors suggest that chronic pain sufferers should find ways of staying cheerful and happy so they will feel less pain.



It can even help you to stay looking young – it uses far less muscles to smile than it does to frown, which means you're less likely to acquire ageing frown lines!

**Even a fake smile can have the same effect – you use virtually the same muscles, which fools the brain into thinking you are happy.**

Levels of these hormones can ebb and flow – in fact the anti-depressant Prozac works

by helping to slow down the loss of serotonin – so remember to smile often throughout the day!

Given the many advantages that smiling has, it makes sense **to keep your smile looking good.** If you feel confident about the way your smile looks, you are far more likely to show it off!

The key to a confident smile is a good oral healthcare routine. This means brushing your teeth twice a day, especially at bedtime, not eating sugary foods too often, and cleaning between teeth and under the gum line each day.

Regular visits to the dental practice are vital too. Problems such as decay can be nipped in the bud, and your teeth and gums benefit enormously from regular professional cleaning.

Other ways of caring for your teeth include drinking water throughout the day, chewing sugar free gum for a little while after each meal and not smoking.

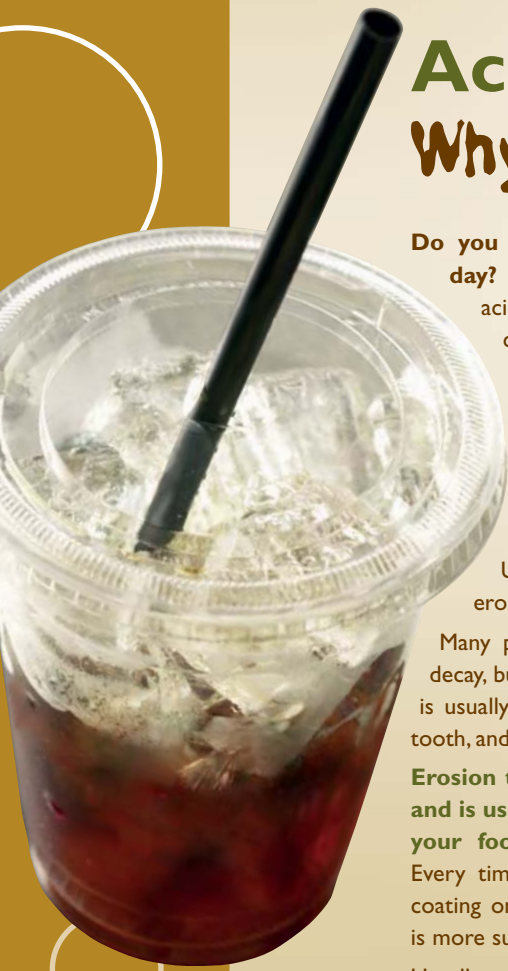
If you are self conscious about your smile for any reason – for example your teeth may be stained, uneven or have gaps between them – we can advise you on the best way to enhance it. Thanks to recent advances in dentistry, most imperfections can be easily removed.

**If you would like more information on caring for or enhancing your smile, please ask next time you visit – we'll be happy to help.**

## Did You Know?

Everyone's set of teeth is unique to them, just as fingerprints are. Even identical twins can be told apart by their teeth.

# Acid Attack: Why Your Teeth Could Be Wearing Away



**Do you drink lots of soft drinks during the day?** If so, you are in danger of suffering from acid erosion, a condition which, over time, can cause pain and sensitivity, and lead to your teeth literally dissolving away.

Tooth erosion is a growing problem for both adults and children, and dentists are becoming increasingly concerned about it. Children are most at risk, with recent statistics showing that over half of the UK's 4-18 year olds have signs of tooth erosion.

Many people confuse tooth erosion with dental decay, but the two are quite different. Tooth decay is usually very localised, affecting only part of your tooth, and is caused by bacteria.

**Erosion tends to affect the surface of a tooth, and is usually caused directly by the acids from your food and drink acting on your teeth.** Every time acid meets your teeth, the hard outer coating on your teeth (enamel) becomes softer and is more susceptible to being worn away.

Usually your saliva will gradually neutralise the acidity and help the teeth to recover, but if you eat or drink

acidic things too often it does not have the chance to do its job.

Anyone who drinks fizzy drinks, squashes or fruit juices – including sports drinks and flavoured fizzy waters – regularly throughout the day is at risk of suffering tooth erosion. Some medical conditions and eating disorders can also lead to tooth erosion, caused by stomach acids.

There are some simple steps you can take to avoid tooth erosion. **Water is the only drink which cannot harm your teeth, so drink it whenever you are thirsty.** Try not to snack between meals, especially on high-acid foods such as sour fruits (oranges, lemons, plums, etc), pickles, vinegar, yoghurt and herbal teas. Don't brush your teeth immediately after eating or drinking anything acidic as it can cause damage to the softened enamel – chew sugar-free gum for a while instead to help produce more neutralising saliva.

**If you have any queries about dental erosion, please ask next time you visit – we'll be delighted to help.**

**Saliva is something of an unsung hero when it comes to tooth care. Indeed, it is only conspicuous by its absence – we virtually ignore it when we have enough, and suffer when we do not.**

## The Wonders of Saliva!

Saliva is a complex fluid which performs many different tasks. Produced by salivary glands in our mouths, it is a natural cleanser, helping to wash away food remnants, bacteria and plaque. It lubricates our tongue, mouth and throat, making it easy to eat, swallow, talk and breathe.

**It helps to neutralise acids which can be harmful to our teeth, and forms a protective barrier on the enamel (outer layer) of our teeth.**

It also helps to counteract infections, makes bacteria less likely to stick to our teeth and gums, and contains calcium and phosphate which help to keep our teeth strong and healthy.

And it is now also proving useful in terms of our overall health

and wellbeing, with saliva tests being increasingly used by medical experts to help diagnose a range of medical conditions.

Unfortunately as we grow older our saliva production can often slow down, which can eventually lead to Dry Mouth Syndrome, or Xerostomia. Sometimes the same effect can be caused by other medical conditions, or as a side effect of medication.

Common problems associated with a dry mouth include a sore throat and difficulty with swallowing or speaking. As well as being uncomfortable for the sufferer, the **lack of saliva can also lead to extensive tooth decay and higher levels of dental erosion if left untreated.**

Treatment for dry mouth syndrome can vary according to the severity and cause of the condition. Taking regular sips of water can help, as can chewing sugar-free gum or low calorie, sugar-free foods such as celery or carrots. There are also artificial treatments available, from sugar-free lozenges to sprays and gels.

**If you suffer from a dry mouth, please talk to us next time you visit so we can discuss the best way of helping you.**





## Did You Know?

Snails can have around 25,000 teeth – and they are found on their tongue!  
By comparison, a human has 32, a dog 42 and a cat 30.

# Great teeth can change your life!

Knowing we look good can make a huge difference to our self-confidence. It can put a real spring in our step, and make us feel as if we could take on the world.

**Our teeth can play a huge part in the way we look and feel** – if we know our smile looks good we are more likely to show it off, which makes us feel better and makes other people react more positively towards us.

That feeling of confidence can have far-reaching effects on your life. It can spur you

on to do things you may not otherwise have considered, from making new friends to taking up new interests.

*"I have been thinking of taking up new interests for years but have never got round to it. Now I have started horse riding and 3 college courses and am really enjoying myself."*

*"I smile a lot more now and I have a lot more confidence."*

**There is a wide range of treatments that can make a huge difference to your smile**, but perhaps the most dramatic change comes from veneers.

These are simply a very thin outer cover, made of extremely realistic, tooth-coloured porcelain which is bonded to the front of your teeth.

They are usually used on front teeth, often to hide discolouration or to even up the appearance of teeth which have gaps, chips, or are misshapen.

*"Looking after my teeth is part of my beauty maintenance programme. They are always on show and it is worth keeping them looking their best."*

Having veneers fitted will usually take just a couple of visits, and **once in place they are virtually undetectable**. They make your teeth look healthy, strong and attractive and, if you look after them well, should last for years.

**If you are considering enhancing your smile, we would be happy to discuss your options with you – please call to arrange a no-obligation consultation.**

Sometimes, no matter how well you care for your teeth, accidents happen and a tooth can be knocked out. But by taking a few simple steps immediately, your tooth will stand a much greater chance of being saved.

## When Accidents Happen...

The most important thing is to **preserve the root**. Avoid touching the root surface and don't try to clean it. If it is very dirty rinse it with milk – do NOT use disinfectant or water.

The tooth needs to be kept moist. If you can, put it straight back into the socket firmly but gently, and bite on a clean handkerchief to help keep it in place. If you can't, or if you do not have the whole tooth, try and keep it in your mouth next to your cheek (but not in the case of young children or if there is severe injury), or put it into some milk.

**Seek emergency dental treatment immediately** – the sooner you see us the greater the chance of saving your tooth. However, if you do end up losing it, there are still a number of options which we can discuss with you, such as bridges and implants.



Many accidental tooth losses are caused on the sports field, so it is a good idea to protect your teeth by wearing a mouthguard. Make sure you ask us to custom-make one for you – ready-made ones are available but do not fit nearly as well or offer as much protection.

## Prevention is Better Than Cure

**Vitamin pills, anti-ageing creams, pro-biotic yogurts – there is no doubt that as a nation we have latched onto the message that it is best to help ourselves to stay healthy and looking good.**

The same preventive message applies to our teeth. We now know that we need to brush twice a day to help keep our breath fresh and our gums healthy, and to help prevent our teeth from decaying.

But no matter how thoroughly you clean your teeth, you are unlikely to be able to remove all the plaque that collects on and around them.

Plaque is a thin, sticky layer of bacteria that is constantly forming on your teeth. The bacteria turns the sugars in food and drink into acid which then eats away at the hard protective coating (enamel) on your teeth, eventually causing tooth decay.

Plaque tends to collect most where your teeth meet your gums and can harden (calcify) into calculus (also known as tartar) which can only be removed by a dental professional. If left, its surface harbours toxins which irritate and inflame the gums.

If left untreated, these toxins can cause gum disease. Early

symptoms of this include bleeding when you brush, and/or sore and swollen gums. Gums start to recede, and eventually the teeth can become loose and you can eventually lose them.

Regular visits to us can help to prevent this from happening to you. We can see where the plaque and calculus has built up on your teeth, and can give your teeth a professional clean to remove it.

We can advise you on additional cleaning methods to help combat gum disease, and can treat any areas of decay early on, nipping potential problems in the bud.

**It is never too late to start caring really well for your teeth – for more information on how to have a healthy mouth and a confident smile, please ask next time you visit.**



**Q. My daughter has just had a brace fitted. Does she need to change her dental care routine?**

**A.** While a good dental care routine is important for everyone, it is particularly important for brace wearers. Your orthodontist will advise your daughter on the best way to care for her teeth, gums and brace.

As a general rule she should clean her teeth and the brace thoroughly after every meal, paying close attention to each individual tooth and its gum line.

If she has a fixed brace, she will need to clean around the wires and brackets. Orthodontists are likely to advise using tiny interdental brushes and floss threaders to do this.

If she has a removable brace, it is likely that she will have to use a toothbrush and paste to clean it. To avoid accidental breakage, she should hold it over a sink full of water or a folded towel when cleaning it – this will break the fall if she drops it.

It is vital that she follows our advice to avoid sugary food and drinks as much as possible. We may also recommend regular use of fluoride mouthwash to help avoid decay and other problems, but this should only be used as instructed by us.

**Q. I've heard my dentist talking about cross infection control. What is this and how does it affect me?**

**A.** Cross infection is the passing of germs from one person to another, and cross infection control is a vital part of a dental practice's daily routine.

To protect both our patients and our staff from unwanted infection, we have rigorous procedures which we need to follow every day. These include wearing examination gloves, masks and eye protection, using disposable equipment where possible, and thoroughly sterilising all our equipment.

They also include methods of dealing with needles and clinical waste, cleaning the treatment rooms both between patients and at the end of the day, and a host of other procedures. We also attend regular training courses on the subject.

In short, we do whatever we can to keep our patients and staff healthy, which means you can relax in the knowledge that you and your family are safe in our hands.



### Questions & Answers