

# blue court smiles

Issue 7

## Welcome to our latest newsletter

**In this issue we look at how you could enhance your smile without spending a fortune, tackle the thorny issue of dental anxiety, and explain why your teeth come under as much pressure as an elephant exerts on the ground! We hope you enjoy reading it.**

Many of our patients have been benefiting from our Airflow system. This sprays a combination of air, water and lemon flavoured sodium bicarbonate onto your teeth, safely removing stains caused by tea, coffee, red wine and smoking, and leaving your mouth feeling fresh and clean.

A new piece of equipment that is also proving popular with patients is our hot towel dispenser – a little bit of luxury that is both practical and soothing to use after treatment.

**Finally, if you are considering having your smile enhanced, we can help you to spread the cost with an interest-free or low-interest dental loan – please ask at reception for more information.**

*If you have any friends or family who may be interested in joining our practice please let us know.*

## Habits that can spoil your teeth



Most of us tend to be creatures of habit when it comes to our day-to-day activities, from when we get up and go to bed to what and when we eat and drink.

**But have you ever stopped to think what effect your daily routine could be having on your teeth?** Because if it includes regular consumption of sugary or acidic food and drink, it may be spoiling them.

Most people will drink tea or coffee throughout the day, and often cold drinks such as squash, fruit juices, fizzy drinks or flavoured water.

A snack or two between meals is not unusual, and in the evening you may visit the gym,

with regular sips of a sports drink; go to the pub with friends; or have an evening in with a glass of wine or two.

The problem is that virtually all soft drinks are acidic, which means they can cause tooth erosion, where the hard outer coating (enamel) on your teeth becomes softer and is more susceptible to being worn away.

Sugary foods and drinks also risk causing decay, where the bacteria in plaque transform the sugar into acid.

Usually your saliva will wash away sugars and neutralise acids, but this takes time (generally around 40 minutes), and if you keep consuming sugary and acidic food and drink it simply cannot keep up, and so your teeth can become damaged.

The best way of keeping your teeth healthy is to adjust your daily routine a little. **Try not to snack between meals, and when possible drink water.** Tea and coffee are fine if they are un-sugared, and if you have a sweet tooth or are partial to a glass of fruit juice or wine each day, then aim to only indulge yourself at mealtimes.

*For more information on how to care for your teeth, please ask – we'll be happy to help.*

# Gum disease

## – your tooth's biggest enemy

*Tooth loss is something that many people worry about – understandably, they don't want to end up with their teeth beside them in a glass each night. In fact, studies have shown that two thirds of adults are concerned about having to wear dentures when they get older.*



However, with the exception of accidental damage, there is much that we can do to help keep our teeth for life.

**The main cause of tooth loss among adults in the UK is gum disease. This condition is extremely common – one in four adults over the age of 35 in the UK suffer from it to some degree.**

Gum disease is caused by a build-up of bacteria in your mouth in a sticky film which constantly forms on your teeth and is known as dental plaque. The first signs include bleeding gums when brushing your teeth, bad breath and an unpleasant taste in your mouth. If left untreated, the gums will detach from the teeth, which can eventually result in loose teeth that may fall out or have to be extracted.

While gum disease cannot be completely cured, it can often be brought under control, or even avoided, with a good daily oral healthcare routine. **Smokers are far more prone to getting gum disease**, and smoking also affects the severity and treatment of the condition.

**We can advise you on the best way to care for your teeth and gums**, but as a general guide you should brush your teeth twice a day, especially at bedtime. Remember to always brush around and underneath the gumline, and between the teeth – we can advise you on the best method for your teeth.

It is vital to have regular **hygiene appointments** with us so we can give your teeth a professional clean, removing any hardened plaque and polishing your teeth so it is more difficult for the plaque to stick to them.

*For more information on how to care properly for your teeth and gums, please speak to us next time you visit.*

## Caring for your teeth while wearing braces

*Orthodontic, or tooth-straightening treatment, is becoming increasingly popular with adults as well as children these days, but to ensure that the procedure is successful, with the best possible results, it is vital to care for your teeth and brace properly.*

While wearing braces, the risk of tooth decay and gum disease is much higher, simply because food particles and bacteria can become lodged in and around the wires.

So you need to follow a **thorough daily oral healthcare routine**. Usually you will be shown exactly what to do, but as a general guide you must clean your teeth carefully twice a day, using a fluoride toothpaste to clean around the brace thoroughly. You should also clean between your teeth and around the gumline if you can.

**Your braces need cleaning with water and a toothbrush after every meal or snack**, so you will need to carry a toothbrush around with you, and you should avoid sugary or acidic food and drinks whenever possible. Limiting them to mealtimes only is best.

Braces are quite delicate, and you need to



make sure you do not damage them. The wires in particular are susceptible to being bent – this can cause problems which can spoil or delay your treatment.

The best way of avoiding damage is to be careful what you eat. Avoid hard and chewy foods – toffee and chewing gum should be completely off limits. Hard foods like apples or crusty bread can be eaten if you cut them up into small pieces first – do not bite into them.

If you take part in contact sports such as rugby, hockey or martial arts, you should protect your teeth and brace with a special orthodontic mouthguard.

*For more information about caring for your teeth and braces, or about how your teeth could be straightened, please ask – we'll be happy to help.*

### Did you Know?

Playing the didgeridoo can improve your sleep! Experts in Switzerland have found that regular training of the upper airways by didgeridoo playing can help reduce snoring.

# Enhancing your smile without breaking the bank!

*If you have ever watched one of the TV makeover programmes that are so popular these days, you have probably noticed just what a difference a smile make-over can make to someone's appearance.*

The only problem with the TV makeovers is that they can still seem inaccessible to those of us who have limited budgets, little spare time or who don't have the help of a huge TV production team. But in fact **smile makeovers can be carried out on virtually anyone. They don't have to be as extreme or as instant as those seen on TV, and can be very affordable.**

If you would like to enhance your smile, the best thing to do is to talk to us. We are constantly investing in the latest dental techniques and technology, and so are generally able to offer a range of treatment options to solve a problem. **There is no obligation to go ahead** with any treatment, but by talking to us we'll be able to explain your options to you.

Many of our patients do not need anything as extreme as you see on the TV. Sometimes a tooth whitening treatment, or some simple bonding to disguise chips or gaps can be all that they need.



**Such treatments can be carried out quickly and relatively inexpensively, yet can make a huge difference.**

If you do need more extensive treatment, we can usually put together a treatment plan that will allow you to have the dentistry carried out gradually, over a time frame that suits you and your budget.

*If you would like to know how we can help you to enhance your smile at a pace and price to suit you and your lifestyle, please ask – we'll be happy to help.*

## Dental anxiety

*If you are one of the millions of people in the UK who suffer from some level of anxiety or phobia when visiting the dentist, then you'll be delighted to hear there are a number of ways in which your fears can be conquered.*

Dental anxiety is extremely common – **5.5 million people in the UK are affected by dental phobia**, with almost one in four of these saying they would rather suffer from toothache than visit the dentist.

There are many reasons behind this fear, including fear of pain, needles, gagging and having things placed inside your mouth. Some people may also feel very vulnerable in the dentist's chair, or may be embarrassed by their teeth. Often your fear can stem from an incident in your childhood.

Whatever the reason, **there are a number of steps you can take to help you conquer your fear.** The first is to share your concerns with us. We understand that many people do have problems with visiting the dentist and are happy to do what we can to help.



Remember too that **modern dental techniques are far more sophisticated, and in many cases are virtually pain-free.** Even the most simple methods of helping can make a huge difference.

These can include taking things very slowly, at a pace to suit you; agreeing a signal enabling you to tell us to stop if you need a break, and putting a pleasant-tasting local anaesthetic gel on your gums before giving you an injection so that you don't feel it.

There are a number of things you can do to help yourself too. Book your appointment for a quiet time of your day so you are not under any time pressures and do some deep breathing exercises. Many people find Bach's Rescue Remedy or aromatherapy helpful.

**For more help and advice, please feel free to speak to us. You can also find advice and support on [www.beyondfear.org](http://www.beyondfear.org)**

## Did you Know?

Our taste buds are part of our defence mechanisms – they warn us if we are eating something that could make us ill. Bitter fruits, for example, are often poisonous, while sour fruits tend to be unripe, and therefore acidic and hard to digest.

# Marvellous mouths

*In our newsletter, we talk about your mouth all the time, especially your teeth and gums. But have you ever stopped to consider just how amazing your mouth really is?*

As a whole, the mouth is able to withstand extremes of temperature, from icy-cold to almost boiling hot. It is almost always damp and warm, and yet generally keeps any bacteria within it under control.

Perhaps the most astonishing fact about your mouth is the amount of pressure that your teeth come under. **When we are chewing our food, we exert around 68lbs per square inch of pressure on our teeth – that is almost as much as a 6,000lb elephant exerts on the ground while standing!** This figure rises if we clench or grind our teeth, up to an amazing 1200lbs per square inch.

Saliva plays a vital role in keeping our mouth healthy, including helping to start the digestive process when we eat, and washing away food remnants, bacteria and plaque.

The pressure exerted daily on teeth means whatever materials we use to restore your teeth have to be extremely strong and long-lasting. They also have to be able to withstand a wide range of temperatures, and to be impervious to enzymes contained within our saliva.



Gold and amalgam used to be the only materials used for restorative work such as fillings, but now research has shown a number of other, less obvious materials can be used.

**In fact, there is a huge choice of materials for procedures such as tooth coloured fillings.** Each one has different properties, ranging from how strong they are and how long they will last to how realistic they look.

Dental professionals have to keep up-to-date with new techniques, and choose materials which are best suited to patients' individual needs and budgets as well as our techniques. This is why we will often give you more than one treatment option, explaining the pros and cons of each one.

**It is vital to keep your mouth healthy so it can continue to function properly.** Regular examinations at our practice, coupled with regular hygienist appointments, will help to keep your mouth in the best possible condition, and will enable us to spot any potential problems, including mouth cancer, at any early stage.

***For more information on how to care properly for your mouth, please ask next time you visit.***

## Questions & Answers

***My friend has told me that brushing my teeth is not enough, and that I need to clean between them as well. Is she right?***

Yes, your friend is absolutely right. Even with the best will in the world, it is virtually impossible to prevent tiny particles of food from accumulating between your teeth. In addition, plaque, a layer of sticky bacteria, is constantly forming on the teeth. This can cause gum disease (see our article on the centre pages) and eventually lead to tooth loss.

So it is vital to clean between your teeth and around your gumline. There are various methods of doing this – we will be happy to advise you on which would be best suited to your teeth, and can show you the best techniques for you.



***A few years ago I had to have a tooth removed. I have been living with the gap since then, but feel it is time I did something about it. I don't want to wear dentures, so what can you do to help me?***

There are several options which may be available to you. Bridges are often a good choice – these are a realistic-looking replacement tooth or teeth which are held in place by the teeth on either side of the space. These teeth need to be strong enough to hold the bridge in place.

Dental implants are an increasingly popular way of replacing missing teeth. An implant is a titanium metal post which is placed into the jawbone, creating a strong and permanent foundation for realistic-looking crowns.

*Please talk with us next time you visit – we will be able to assess your mouth and teeth to see which method would suit your needs best.*