



# Alexandra dental care

*Quality dental care for all the family*

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## A Breath of Fresh Air



**B**ad breath or halitosis has been a problem for mankind since the beginning of most of recorded history. There are many causes such as spicy foods and garlic, dry mouths, smoking, etc. It is estimated that 85-90% of bad breath conditions come from sources in the mouth.

Gum disease can be and is a significant cause of halitosis. Tartar or scale that builds up on teeth around the gums has a rough surface that attracts bacteria. Putrefaction of these bacteria results in volatile sulphur gases which lead to foul odours. Bad breath also originates from accumulated bacterial plaques and food coated on the back of the tongue.

Scale cannot be brushed off and so teeth have to be de-scaled regularly by the dentist or hygienist, thus reducing the potential for halitosis causing bacteria and other gum problems. The dental team would also show where brushing or flossing could help prevent the stagnations of food debris particularly in areas where you have large old fillings with rough edges.

In cases of more advanced gum disease a charting of 'gum pocketing' would be made showing areas of inflamed gums that bleed easily. In these areas the bacterial activity and resultant sulphur compounds is greatest.

If you are worried and think you may have bad breath then you must ask your dentist or hygienist. They can assess the level of your problem and check for areas in your mouth that may be contributing to the problem.

Recent research has allowed the development of Fresh Breath kits, which are now available at the practice. These include specially formulated toothpastes, mouthrinses, lozenges and also tongue cleaners.

# PRACTICE

## News

### Looking after your children's teeth

**A** child's primary ('milk' or 'baby') teeth generally start to appear at around 6-9 months of age, but caring for their teeth should begin when you first start to introduce solid foods. Try to use natural foods without added sugars (such as glucose, sucrose, fructose and maltose) so as you do not encourage a preference for highly sweetened foods.

As your children grow older, watch out for 'hidden' sugars in foods and drinks, and also for the acidity of many fruit juices, squashes and fizzy drinks; even the 'sugar free' ones are so acidic that they can literally dissolve teeth! Remember that vitamin C is in fact an acid, so also watch out for all those 'healthy' fruit snacks(!)

The risk of developing tooth decay greatly increases with the frequency of sugar and acid consumption; the more often your children expose their teeth to sugar and acid, the more likely it is that they will cause permanent damage to their teeth.

If your children are happy to stick with water and milk, great, but if not, it is important to discuss with them how to reduce their risk of damage from the frequency of sugar and acid. Perhaps as a family, you could agree to restrict fruit and fizzy drinks to meal times only, to completely ban sticky and chewy sweets (which attach themselves to the teeth and cause a greater threat) or to introduce a weekly 'attack day' (making sure the other 6 days are kept free of additional sugars and acid!).

Whatever 'house rules' you decide with your children, help them to understand that high sugar and acid intakes put them at risk of developing tooth decay. As children grow older and become tempted by the corner shop and canned drink vending machines, they need to understand that reducing the frequency of sugar and acid attacks is a major factor in helping to prevent tooth decay.

### Can't smile without you



**T**here is no getting away from it, a smile is simply not the same without a healthy row of teeth displayed with confidence and pride. If you have any questions or concerns about your smile, please take a minute to ask one of our staff. You may be surprised to learn how we can help.

**PLEASE ASK FOR YOUR INDIVIDUAL SMILE CHECK AT YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT**

# To tell the

For years, man has practised the benefit of "scraping" teeth to clean them. Many appliances were used to fulfil this task, even simple hazel twigs did the trick. It is quite alarming, therefore, to realise that today, many people still find simple flossing of teeth an unfamiliar and unpopular form of dental hygiene.

Perhaps the motivation to keep teeth clean was far greater years ago, as the prospect of dental "treatment" was far worse. Lost teeth could be replaced with teeth made from elephant ivory, hippo tusk or bone, which were anchored to neighbouring teeth with silver wire or silk thread.

How times have changed! We hope that all our patients can visit our practice with confidence and enthusiasm. Today we hope to help our patients keep their teeth for life.

With regular checks at the practice and advice on excellent home techniques, we hope to help you keep harmful bacteria at bay, therefore, reducing the risk of tooth decay and gum disease. Diet also plays an important part in oral and dental health.

Surprising food villains, disguising sugars and acids, mean that our so-called healthy western diet bombard our teeth with harmful substances every day. Try our quick quiz and see how well you know your tooth friends or foes!

For those who have already lost teeth, we have come a long way since the days of tusk and bone. By using implants and bridges, missing teeth can be easily replaced and damaged teeth can be restored, using modern techniques, to regain a perfect



# Oral Cancer Screening

You probably don't even realise it, but your regular dental check involves far more than just your teeth and gums. Dentists are also trained to examine the oral soft tissues (lips, tongue, floor of mouth, cheeks, roof of mouth and throat) for signs of disease, and specifically oral (mouth) cancer.

Oral cancer occurs nearly as frequently as cervical cancer, although it causes more deaths. Early detection is essential to increase the chances of a complete cure; if the cancer is caught early enough, it can be treated and cured very simply.

You are more at risk of developing oral cancer if you smoke or drink alcohol, with the risks heavily increasing if you do both. The use of chewing tobacco (as seen in many ethnic cultures) is also a major risk factor for developing oral cancer. All these risk factors are further increased with age, although oral cancer is being increasingly diagnosed in younger patients, and even children.

In addition to attending your dentist for regular checks, you can greatly reduce your own risk of developing oral cancer by stopping smoking and reducing your alcohol intake. Smoking cessation is very topical at the moment, with much awareness, help and support available. Try Quitline (0800 002200) and Drinkline (0345 320202) as well as asking your dentist, doctor or pharmacist for information.

Alternatively, if you have any

## IF YOU HAVE TO CANCEL AN APPOINTMENT

Please give us plenty of notice in order that we can offer the time to someone waiting for treatment. We may make a charge for short notice cancellations or missed appointments.

## BUDGET MONTHLY AND

If you act promptly, this may mean you will qualify for a discount on your next visit, or even pay nothing, as your normal maintenance is included in the plan. Please ask for further details at reception.

Many patients have taken the opportunity of joining our practice plan and have been delighted with the benefits. We thought it was worthwhile reminding you of the savings our plan members are making and point out that you can join the plan at any time. This is especially relevant if you are considering treatment, as you will receive a discount on your fee.

### What next?

Please telephone the practice if you would like us to send you a registration form by post.

Alternatively, you can call in to the practice and we can complete a form. This will only take a few minutes and will require simply your name and address and bank account details.

## Quiz

# How Much Sugar?

One lucky winner with all answers correct will win a £10 wine voucher.

- Food \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaspoons \_\_\_\_\_  
of Sugar \_\_\_\_\_
- SHREDDED WHEAT - one biscuit \_\_\_\_\_  
FRUIT YOGHURT - 1 carton \_\_\_\_\_  
TOMATO KETCHUP - 4 teaspoon portion \_\_\_\_\_
- COLA DRINK - 1 can \_\_\_\_\_  
CHEESE - 1 inch cube \_\_\_\_\_  
PEANUT BUTTER - 3 teaspoon portion \_\_\_\_\_
- MARS BAR - 1 standard bar \_\_\_\_\_  
SPIRITS - 1 pub measure \_\_\_\_\_  
HONEY - 2 teaspoon portion \_\_\_\_\_

4 items have only a trace of sugar  
1 has ½ teaspoon sugar  
1 has 1 teaspoon of sugar  
2 have 2 teaspoons of sugar and the remainder have 5, 6, 8 and 9 respectively

TEST YOUR SUGAR MATCH KNOWLEDGE

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code.....