

# The Rickmansworth Dental Centre

## Newsletter

tel/fax: 01923 777450

e-mail: [dentist@thedentalcentre.org](mailto:dentist@thedentalcentre.org)

Issue 14, Autumn 2004

Welcome to the fourteenth Rickmansworth Dental Centre Newsletter. Thank you for your positive feedback on previous issues. If you have any comments on our newsletter or anything you would like to see in it, please let us know.

### Practice News

Welcome to our Autumn 2004 Newsletter. Summer is over (did it ever start?) and the nights are drawing in. Christmas and New Year are rapidly approaching as the 'shopping days to go' countdown, which started in August this year, is constantly reminding us.

For added security and to make Pam's life a bit easier on the desk, we've installed a new buzzer entry system. After a few teething problems (sorry to any patients that were locked out!), this is now working very well. We are also in the process of installing a more efficient and informative answer machine for when we cannot personally take your call. It does seem to have quite a lot of buttons and flashing lights, but it should be up and running very soon, if we can decipher the instruction manual!

The practice website has been updated again. A new section has been added on what to do if a tooth is knocked out. This will hopefully never be needed, but might prove very useful in an emergency. It can be found by following the 'In an Emergency' link at [www.thedentalcentre.org](http://www.thedentalcentre.org),



### Recall Intervals

You may have seen press reports that intervals between routine dental checkups are to be increased. What has actually happened is that The National Institute for Clinical Excellence has just produced new guidelines on suggested recall intervals. There is a 68 page guide (some fun bedtime reading for Adam!) which we will have to go through and assess. Initial recommendations include recalls for under 18's to be between 3 and 12 months and for adults to be between 3 and 24 months. We will implement these recommendations only once we have fully assessed the guidelines and we are sure you are receiving the best possible treatment.

### The Incredibles

Sorry to mention Christmas and shopping, but if you're looking for a last minute stocking filler, we have just got the latest childrens' toothbrushes from Oral-B. Available in four sizes from baby to 12 years, They are based on the new blockbuster film 'The Incredibles'. For a limited period, with every 2 toothbrushes we are giving away a free Incredibles radio as well as stickers and postcards.



### Christmas Opening

We have yet to confirm our opening times over the Christmas period. However, when we are shut, arrangements will be made for patients with severe emergencies. Outside of normal working hours, including Bank Holidays, there is an emergency service available. Details of this can be heard on the practice's answer phone message.



### Dental Hygienist

Donna, our dental hygienist is still at the practice, helping patients keep their teeth and gums healthy. There is information about the hygienist and what she does on the back of this newsletter.



### Focus On Sensitive Teeth

#### What are sensitive teeth?

Having sensitive teeth can mean anything from getting a mild tingle to having severe discomfort that can continue for several hours. It can also be an early warning sign of more serious dental problems.

#### Who suffers from sensitive teeth?

Many people suffer from sensitive teeth and it can start at any time. It is more common in people aged between 20 and 40, although it can affect people in their early teens and when they are over 70. Women are more likely to be affected than men.

#### What causes sensitive teeth?

The part of the tooth we can see is covered by a layer of enamel that protects the softer dentine underneath.



If the dentine is exposed, a tooth can become sensitive. This usually happens where the tooth and the gum meet and the enamel layer is much thinner. Here are some causes of sensitivity:

**Toothbrush abrasion** – brushing too hard, and brushing from side to side, can cause dentine to be worn away, particularly where the teeth meet the gums. The freshly exposed dentine may then become sensitive.

**Dental erosion** – this is loss of tooth enamel caused by attacks of acid from acidic food and drinks. If enamel is worn away the dentine underneath is exposed, which may lead to sensitivity.

**Gum recession** – gums may naturally recede (shrink back), and the roots will become exposed. Root surfaces do not have an enamel layer to protect them and can be more sensitive.

**Gum disease** – a build-up of plaque or tartar can cause the gum to recede down the tooth and even destroy the bony support of the tooth. Pockets can form in the gums around the tooth, making the area difficult to keep clean and the problem worse

**Tooth grinding** – this is a habit which involves clenching and grinding the teeth together. This can cause the enamel of the teeth to be worn away, making the teeth sensitive.

**A cracked tooth or filling** – a cracked tooth is one that has become broken. A crack can run from the biting surface of a tooth down towards the root. Extreme temperatures, especially cold, may cause discomfort.

**Tooth bleaching** – some patients have sensitivity for a short time during or after having their teeth bleached.

#### When are teeth more likely to be sensitive?

You are more likely to feel the sensitivity when drinking or eating something cold, from cold air catching your teeth, and sometimes with hot foods or drinks. Some people have sensitivity when they have sweet or acidic food and drink. The pain can come and go, with some times being worse than others.

#### Is there anything I can do to treat sensitive teeth at home?

There are many brands of toothpaste on the market made to help ease the pain of sensitive teeth. The toothpaste should be used twice a day to brush your teeth. It can also be rubbed onto the sensitive areas. These toothpastes can take anything from a few days to several weeks to take effect. We should be able

to advise you on which type of toothpaste would be best for you.

#### **Is there anything I should avoid if I have sensitive teeth?**

You may find that hot, cold, sweet or acidic drinks or foods like ice cream can bring on sensitivity, so you may want to avoid these. If you have sensitivity when brushing your teeth with cold water from the tap, you may need to use warm water instead. It is important you do not avoid brushing your teeth regularly as this could make the problem worse.

#### **Do I need to go and see the dentist?**

Yes, if you have tried treating your sensitive teeth for a few weeks and have had no improvement or if the problem is getting worse.

#### **What treatments can the dentist offer?**

During an examination Adam will talk to you about your symptoms. He will look at your teeth to find out what is causing the sensitivity and to find the best way of treating it. We may treat the affected teeth with special de-sensitising products to help relieve the symptoms. Fluoride gels, rinses or varnishes can be applied to sensitive teeth. Sensitivity can take some time to settle. If this still does not help, your dentist may seal or fill around the neck of the tooth, where the tooth and gum meet, to cover exposed dentine. In very serious cases it may be necessary to remove the nerve and root-fill the tooth.

#### **How can I prevent sensitive teeth?**

Brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste. Use small circular movements with a soft- to medium-bristled brush. Try to avoid brushing your teeth from side to side. Change your toothbrush every two to three months or sooner if it becomes worn. Have sugary foods and fizzy and acidic drinks less often. Try to have them only at mealtimes. If you grind your teeth, talk to us about the possibility of having a mouthguard made to wear at night when most of the damage occurs. Also visit The Dental Centre for regular check-ups.

## **Visiting the Dental Hygienist**

At The Dental Centre we have a dental hygienist, Donna. She is here on Mondays and Thursdays.

Listed below are a few of the most frequently asked questions about hygienists and what a visit to the hygienist involves.

#### **What is a hygienist?**

Dental hygienists are specially trained to work with the dentist in providing care tailored to the patients' needs.

They play an important role in dental health care and are mainly concerned with gum health, education in correct home care and the application of preventive materials to the teeth and gums.

The hygienist's provides professional cleaning of the teeth for the patient. Most importantly they educate the patient in the best way to keep the teeth free of plaque.

#### **Why is this treatment important?**

Regular professional cleaning combined with your home care will help maintain a healthy mouth. A clean and healthy mouth will improve your appearance, help you keep your teeth and give you fresh breath.

#### **Can a hygienist help prevent dental disease?**

The training of the hygienist is centred on preventing dental disease. Carefully removing the deposits that build up on the teeth and teaching you how to prevent it reforming again, will go a long way to slowing the progress of gum disease. Anti-bacterial gels and solutions can be applied under the gum to kill the bacteria causing gum disease. By discussing your diet and recommending other preventive measures your decay rate can also be reduced.

Children can benefit from having their teeth polished. The hygienist can also apply fluoride gels and solutions to help prevent decay. The permanent back teeth can also benefit from having the fissures sealed.

#### **Why doesn't the dentist do this work?**

Dr. Deitsch will carry out this type of work. However, the hygienist has been specially trained to carry out scaling and polishing and can spend longer with you. They are also expert at teaching you how to look after your teeth and gums. Often the hygienist will spend a number of appointments getting the gums healthy ready for the dentist to do the more complex treatment.

#### **Will the treatment hurt?**

Scaling and polishing is usually pain-free. However, if you do experience some discomfort the hygienist can eliminate this with the use of topical anaesthetic creams or by giving you some local anaesthetic. It is important that you let the hygienist know at the time so that some pain control can be given.

#### **What can I do to help the Hygienist?**

You can do a great deal to help yourself and the hygienist as you are in control of your mouth between visits to the practice.

Your hygienist will have shown you how to remove plaque with a toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. You will also have been shown how to clean between your teeth with floss, tape or little brushes. There are many products now available and your hygienist will recommend those that are appropriate for you.

#### **Do I need to see the hygienist?**

Following your routine examination Dr. Deitsch will advise you if you require a visit to the hygienist. If you feel you wish to see the hygienist anyway, please contact the surgery and this can be arranged for you.

If you have any queries or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.



*Have a good Autumn. With Best Wishes from Adam Deitsch and all the staff at The Dental Centre. Don't forget you can find us online at [www.thedentalcentre.org](http://www.thedentalcentre.org)*

