

The Rickmansworth Dental Centre

Newsletter

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Issue 15, Winter 2005

Welcome to the fifteenth 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 Winter 2004 Newsletter. We hope you had a good festive season and are avoiding the current crop of bugs that are doing the rounds. Initial 'teething'(!) problems of our new entryphone system and telephone answering machine appear to have been overcome. 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,



Focus On Children's Teeth



When does the first tooth develop?

The age at which the first tooth appears differs greatly from child to child. Very occasionally, children are born with one or more teeth. These may need to be removed if they are very loose, as there is a risk that the child could swallow them, or have difficulties with breastfeeding.

Other children may not develop any teeth until they are more than a year old.

Usually, however, the first tooth - which tends to be in the middle of the lower jaw - appears at around six months of age.

The complete set of 20 primary teeth (baby teeth) is usually present by the age of two-and-a-half years.

The first permanent teeth appear at around six years of age. These tend to be the incisors in the middle of the lower jaw and the first permanent molar teeth.

The molars come up behind the primary teeth, they do not replace them.

Myths about teething

Many things have been attributed to teething: rashes, crying, bad temper, runny noses, extra dirty nappies, etc. None of this can be proven, particularly as so many other things that might influence behaviour are happening in the child's life at the same time. The important thing is not to use teething to explain away what might be the signs of illness.

What to do when your child is teething

Some teeth come through with no trouble at all; in other cases, the gum may be sore and red where the tooth is pushing its way out. A child may dribble, gnaw and chew a lot or just be fretful, but it is difficult to tell if this is really due to teething. It can be helpful to give the child something hard to chew on.

Teething rings that can be cooled in the fridge can be particularly soothing. Sugar-free paracetamol may also be given. Be sure to follow the instructions according to the child's age.

Cleaning your child's teeth

Begin cleaning the baby's mouth during the first few days after birth. After every feeding, wipe the baby's gums with a damp washcloth or gauze pad to remove plaque. This establishes at an early age the importance of oral hygiene and the feel of having clean teeth and gums.

Start brushing as soon as teeth appear. Brush thoroughly twice a day (just before bed is important).

Help your child brush until they are able to do it well by themselves - usually around the age of seven.

Use a fluoride toothpaste and encourage your child to spit after brushing; do not rinse afterwards as this reduces the benefits of the fluoride in the toothpaste. Use a tiny smear of toothpaste for babies and a pea-sized amount for children. Young children will swallow the toothpaste; use a children's toothpaste with reduced fluoride until they are able to spit well.

There are many different types of children's toothbrushes available, including brightly coloured brushes, some of which change colour, those with favourite characters on the handles, and some with timers. These all encourage children to brush their teeth. The most important point is to use a small-headed toothbrush with soft, nylon bristles, suitable for the age of your child.

Diet and Children's Teeth

Reduce your child's sugar intake. As soon as you start your baby on solids, try to encourage a liking for savoury, rather than sweet tastes. It is also worth remembering that some processed baby foods contain quite a lot of sugar. Reduce the amount of sugary food or drinks you give your child and limit these to mealtimes.

Use stickers, comics, crayons, hair slides, etc, as treats instead of sweets or biscuits. The frequency of sugar intake is more important than the quantity; if you give sweets as treats, ensure they are all eaten at the same time.

If you want to give your child a snack, try to stick to cheese, vegetables and fruit, but not dried fruit.

Only give water or plain milk in a bottle. Juices should be diluted and given in a cup. Limit fizzy drinks and natural fruit juices as they contain sugar and are acidic. They cause decay and erosion that will, literally, dissolve the teeth. Do not put anything sweet on dummies/comforters.

Read labels carefully. Try checking the list of ingredients: the higher up the list sugar is, the more there is in the product.

Opening Times

For a trial period, we are starting half an hour earlier at 8.30am on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Fridays we will continue to open at 8.00am. If this proves popular we will introduce these new opening times on a permanent basis.



The Incredibles

We still have some of the latest children's 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.



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.

Continued Overleaf

Sugar may be listed as glucose, sucrose, honey, dextrose, maltose, fructose, hydrolysed starch or syrup. Remember that maltodextrin, honey, raw sugar, cane sugar, muscavado and fruit juices all cause decay. Every time even small amounts of sugar are consumed, the acid level in the mouth falls to a level where it can cause dental decay for about half an hour. For this reason, it is not recommended to brush teeth immediately after something sweet or acidic since the teeth are weakened and brushing 'scours' the surface of the enamel. It's a better idea to wait half an hour after eating before brushing.

Ask for sugar-free medicines.

When should I take my child to the dentist?

It is recommended that children should go to the dentist with their parents as soon as possible. You should then take them regularly, on average once every 6 months. This will let them get used to the noises, smells and surroundings and prepare them for future visits. The earlier these visits begin, the more relaxed the children will be.

What if my child is very nervous about going to the dentist?

Children can sense fear in their parents, so it is important not to let your child feel that a visit to the dentist is something to be worried about. Try to be supportive if your child needs to have any dental treatment. If you have any fears of your own about going to the dentist, don't discuss them in front of your child.

Regular visits to the dentist are essential in helping your child to get used to the surroundings and what goes on there. A child can be much more anxious if it is their first visit to a dental practice. Pain and distress can happen at any time and it is important to prepare your child with regular visits.

Further information can be obtained at The Dental Centre. Newsletter issue 5 had more information on diet and teeth and Newsletter issue 12 had more information on fluoride. Both of these newsletters can be found online at www.thedentalcentre.org.

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 winter. Wishing you a happy and healthy New Year
from Adam Deitsch and all the staff at The Dental Centre.
Don't forget you can find us online at www.thedentalcentre.org.*

