

# The Rickmansworth Dental Centre

## Newsletter

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Welcome to the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 Summer 2005 Newsletter. We hope you are enjoying the sunshine and hot weather (or at least the thought of it!). We have invested in some new fans, the water cooler has been topped up and the portable air conditioning unit is on standby. So if a heat wave hits, your visit to The Dental Centre should be as comfortable as possible. Remember, if there is anything you would like to see at the practice or if there is any way we can make your visit more pleasant, please let us know and we will try to oblige.



### Mouthguards

With the new school year about to start, many schools now insist that their pupils use mouthguards for certain sports. At The Dental Centre we provide a range of custom made mouthguards, available in a variety of colours and thickness depending on the sport being played. Although home kits are available to make mouthguards, their use is not recommended as they do not fit as well as the custom made guards and can actually cause more harm than good.



Please ask Adam or Pam for further details.

### 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.



### Happy Birthday To Us

We have just celebrated our 5<sup>th</sup> birthday at The Dental Centre. We have continually updated and improved all areas of the practice over the past five years to provide you with the best treatment possible. Hopefully we can continue to do this for many more years to come.



### Thank You

We were surprised and proud to find that the practice had been nominated in the Best Patient Care category in The 2005 Dental Awards. Many thanks to all the patients who voted for us. Our certificate of nomination is taking pride of place on the waiting room wall.



### Holidays

With the holiday season upon us, a reminder that if Adam is away the practice will still be open and the phone manned during normal opening times. Arrangements will be made for patients with severe emergencies.



Outside 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. To access the given options on our new answer phone, on some phones you might have to press the required option number while the message is still playing.

### Focus On Dry Mouth

#### What is dry mouth?

Dry mouth is the condition of not having enough saliva, or spit, to keep your mouth wet. The technical term for dry mouth is xerostomia.

#### What are the symptoms of dry mouth?

Symptoms include: A sticky, dry feeling in the mouth

Trouble chewing, swallowing, tasting, or speaking

A burning feeling in the mouth

A dry feeling in the throat

Cracked lips

A dry, rough tongue

Mouth sores

Fungal or bacterial infections of the mouth

#### Why is saliva so important?

Saliva does more than keep the mouth wet.

It helps digest food

It protects teeth from decay

It prevents infection by controlling bacteria and fungi in the mouth

It makes it possible for you to chew and swallow

Without enough saliva you can develop tooth decay or other infections in the mouth. You also might not get the nutrients you need if you cannot

chew and swallow certain foods.

#### What causes dry mouth?

If the glands in the mouth that make saliva are working properly, the sensation of a dry mouth is a common complaint and is often related to anxiety, stress or depression. Dry mouth on waking in the morning may be due to mouth breathing.

Dehydration due to diarrhoea and vomiting or after surgery can cause a dry mouth. People with certain disorders, like Alzheimer's disease or those who have suffered a stroke, may not feel wetness in their mouth and may think their mouth is dry even though it is not. If the glands in the mouth that make saliva are not

working properly, there might not be enough saliva to keep your mouth wet. There are several reasons why these glands (called salivary glands) might not work correctly:

Side effects of some medicines. More than 400 medicines can cause the salivary glands to make less saliva.

Medicines for high blood pressure and depression often cause dry mouth. A list of the most common drugs that can cause a dry mouth can be found on the practice website ([www.deitsch.plus.com/dry.html](http://www.deitsch.plus.com/dry.html)).

Disease. Some diseases affect the salivary glands. Sjögren's Syndrome, HIV/AIDS, diabetes and Parkinson's disease can all cause dry mouth.

Radiation therapy. The salivary glands can be damaged if they are exposed to radiation during cancer treatment. Chemotherapy. Drugs used to treat cancer can make saliva thicker, causing the mouth to feel dry.

Nerve damage. Injury to the head or neck can damage the nerves that tell salivary glands to make saliva.

#### What can be done about dry mouth?

Dry mouth treatment will depend on what is causing the problem. If you think you have dry mouth, see the dentist or your doctor. They can try to determine what is causing your dry mouth.

If your dry mouth is caused by medicine, your doctor might change your medicine or adjust the dosage. If your salivary glands are not working right but can still produce some saliva, there might be medication available that helps the glands work better.



You may be able to use artificial saliva to keep your mouth wet.

#### **What can I do?**

Sip water or sugarless drinks often.

Avoid drinks with caffeine, such as coffee, tea, and some sodas. Caffeine can dry out the mouth.

Sip water or a sugarless drink during meals. This will make chewing and swallowing easier. It may also improve the taste of food. Be aware that spicy or salty foods may cause pain in a dry mouth.

Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless boiled sweets to stimulate saliva flow; citrus, cinnamon or mint-flavoured sweets are good choices.

Consider reducing or cutting out caffeine and alcohol which have a diuretic effect. (They can make you pass more urine which can be dehydrating.) Caffeine occurs in tea, coffee, cola and other drinks. It is also part of some medicines. Use of tobacco products does not help a dry mouth.

You can apply petroleum jelly to your lips to prevent drying and cracking.

Use a humidifier at night.

#### **Tips for keeping your teeth healthy**

Remember, if you have dry mouth, you need to be extra careful to keep your teeth healthy. Make sure you:

Gently brush your teeth at least twice a day.

Floss your teeth or use an interdental brush every day.

Use toothpaste with fluoride in it, as fluoride helps strengthen the teeth and prevent decay. Fluoride mouthwashes also help keep your teeth healthy.

Avoid sticky, sugary foods.

Visit your dentist for a check-up at least twice a year

### **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 Summer  
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).*

