



# The Rickmansworth Dental Centre Newsletter

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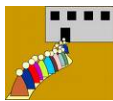
Welcome to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Rickmansworth Dental Centre Newsletter. Thank you for your positive feedback on previous issues. If you have any comments on our newsletter or anything you would like to see in it, please let us know.

## Practice News

Welcome to our Winter 2007 Newsletter. We hope you had a good Christmas and are having a healthy and happy New Year, avoiding the usual plethora of bugs that are doing the rounds at the moment. Last newsletter we reported some sad news about our vibrating injection system (the Vibraject - see Newsletter 19). It was proving a great success, making injections almost painless, however we must have over used it as it stopped working! It had to go back to America for repair, but it is now up and buzzing again.



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.



## NHS Patients

Due to a sharp increase in patients wishing to make appointments, we started a waiting list for new NHS patients. We have now been able to start taking on new patients from this waiting list. We are carefully regulating the number of new patients, to make sure we are able to continue to provide our normal high standard of treatment for our existing patients.

To try and reduce the number of wasted appointments, when patients fail to turn up, we are warning patients who miss two or more appointments (without cancelling first) that they may be refused any further appointments at the practice.

## Goodbye & Hello

Goodbye and good luck to our nurse, Carla, who after a year with us, is moving on. A big welcome to our new nurse, Santok.



## Dental Hygienist

We have a new hygienist at The Dental Centre. Imran is here all day Monday and Thursday. Initial reports from patients are very positive - apparently he is very gentle! Donna is still at the practice, helping patients keep their teeth and gums healthy, but she has reduced her hours to one Saturday morning a month. There is information about hygienists and what they do on the back of this newsletter.



## Antibiotic Cover

Due to a recent change in recommendations, we are now asking all patients who need to take antibiotic cover, to come in an hour before their appointment and take their antibiotics in the practice. This is not because we don't trust you to take the medication, but there is a very small chance of an allergic reaction to the antibiotic and we have the equipment at the practice to deal with a problem should it arise. We are sorry if this causes any inconvenience, but it is for your own well being that these recommendations are being implemented. If you require any further information or advice, please do not hesitate to phone The Dental Centre.



Due to the new recommendations, patients requiring antibiotic cover should discuss with their doctor or specialist if they still require antibiotic cover, as it has been concluded that many conditions no longer require it.

## Focus On Gum and Heart Disease

### What is gum disease?

Gum disease describes swelling, soreness or infection of the tissues supporting the teeth. There are two main forms of gum disease: gingivitis and periodontal disease.

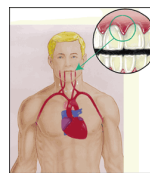
Gingivitis means inflammation of the gums. This is when the gums around the teeth become very red and swollen. Often the swollen gums bleed when they are brushed during cleaning.

Long-standing gingivitis can turn into periodontal disease. There are a number of types of periodontal disease and they all affect the tissues supporting the teeth. As the disease gets worse the bone anchoring the teeth in the jaw is lost, making the teeth loose. If this is not treated, the teeth may eventually fall out.

All gum disease is caused by plaque. Plaque is a film of bacteria, which forms on the surface of the teeth and gums every day. Many of the bacteria in plaque are completely harmless, but there are some that have been shown to be the main cause of gum disease.

### What is heart disease?

One of the main causes of heart disease is atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is when the arteries become narrow and damaged. It happens when the arteries are clogged up



with fatty deposits or the walls of the arteries become inflamed. This narrowing can happen in the arteries that supply blood to the heart, depriving it of the oxygen and nutrients it needs to work normally. When the blood flow through an artery is stopped, a heart attack can occur. Arteries supplying blood to the brain can also be affected by atherosclerosis. If a blood clot becomes lodged in a narrowed artery, blood flow to part of the brain may be stopped. This is called a stroke.

### What is the connection between gum and heart disease?

Over the past ten years, there have been many studies linking gum disease and heart disease. At first, there were observations that people with poor oral health were more prone to heart disease.

More recently, scientists have found clear links between the total amount of periodontal (gum) bacteria in the mouth and blockages in the arteries of the heart.

Researchers have found that people with periodontal disease are almost twice as likely to suffer from coronary artery disease as those without periodontal disease.

Several theories exist to explain the link between periodontal disease and heart disease. One theory is that oral bacteria can affect the heart when they enter the blood stream, attaching to fatty plaques in the coronary arteries (heart blood vessels) and contributing to clot formation. Coronary artery disease is characterized by a thickening of the walls of the coronary arteries due to the build up of fatty proteins. Blood clots can obstruct normal blood flow, restricting the amount of nutrients and oxygen required for the heart to function properly. This may lead to heart attacks.

Other possibilities lie in the body's own defence mechanisms against bacteria. One of the body's natural responses to infection is inflammation (swelling). It's possible that as these oral bacteria travel through the body, they trigger a similar response, causing the cells to swell. This swelling could then narrow an artery and increase the risk of clots.

### What are the signs of gum disease?

The first sign is blood on the toothbrush

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or in the rinsing water on cleaning the teeth. Diseased gums may also bleed when eating, leaving a bad taste in the mouth. The breath may also become unpleasant.

#### **What do I do if I think I have gum disease?**

The first thing to do is visit the dentist for a thorough check-up of your teeth and gums. The dentist can measure the 'cuff' of gum around each tooth to see if there is any sign that periodontal disease has started. X-rays may also be needed to see the amount of bone that has been lost. This assessment is very important, so the correct treatment can be prescribed for you.

#### **What treatments are needed?**

The dentist or hygienist will usually give your teeth a thorough clean. You'll also be shown how to remove plaque successfully yourself, cleaning all the surfaces of your teeth thoroughly and effectively. This may take a number of sessions with the dentist or hygienist. Once your teeth are clean, further cleaning of the roots of the teeth, may be required to make sure the last pockets of bacteria are removed. Application of antibiotics or other medicaments may help restore the gums to full health.

In very severe cases, referral to a gum specialist may be considered. See below for more information on dental hygienists.

#### **Once I have had periodontal disease, can I get it again?**

The periodontal diseases are never cured. But as long as you keep up the home care you have been taught, any further loss of bone will be very slow and it may stop altogether. However, you must make sure you remove plaque every day, and go for regular check-ups by the dentist and hygienist.

### **Visiting the Dental Hygienist**

At The Dental Centre we have two dental hygienists. Imran, our new hygienist, is here on Mondays and Thursdays. Donna works one Saturday morning a month.

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.

The 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 the 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.



*Hope you have a warm Winter.  
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)*

