



# The Rickmansworth Dental Centre Newsletter

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Welcome to the 32<sup>nd</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 Spring 2009 Newsletter. We hope you have had a good few weeks and survived the snow and bugs over the Winter period. Spring is definitely on the way, we appear to have avoided the mass annihilation from Swine Flu and all our MP's have nice clean moats! All good reasons to smile, especially as National Smile Month begins in May; more details further in the newsletter.

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.

## Clean Water System



In the dental unit we have implemented a new clean water system. Previously mains drinking water was used, which was very clean and safe. The new system cleans the water even more, making it purer than normal drinking water. The only difference you may notice is that the purified water has a very faint mint flavour.

## Dental Shortage!



Due to a shortage of dentists the Government are looking into alternative ways of providing dental care.



Please rest assured, we have no plans at The Dental Centre to employ one of the new 'breed' of dentist!

## Dental Hygienist



Both our hygienists are still at the practice, helping patients keep their teeth and gums healthy. Imran is here all day Monday and Thursday. He now also does occasional Tuesdays. Our receptionist can inform you of these when booking an appointment. Donna is here one Saturday morning a month. There is information about hygienists and what they do on the back of this newsletter.

## National Smile Month



National Smile Month 2009 highlights the systemic links between oral health and overall body health. Scientific research links gum disease to heart disease, strokes, diabetes and premature and low birth weight babies. The campaign is run by the British Dental Health Foundation.

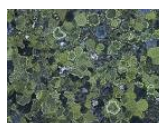
The Foundation's three key messages are:

- 1 Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- 2 Visit the dentist regularly
3. Cut down on the frequency of sugary foods and drinks

For more information on the campaign and activities visit [www.nationalsmileweek.org](http://www.nationalsmileweek.org) Remember - It takes 43 muscles to frown, but only 17 muscles to smile. That makes it 2.5 times easier to smile!



## Focus On Oral Lichen Planus



Lichen planus is an inflammatory disease that strikes primarily the skin and mucous membranes. In rare cases, it also affects the hair and nails. When it appears in your mouth it is called 'oral lichen planus'. The causes of lichen planus are largely unknown. A few cases are linked to allergic reactions to specific drugs or dental materials. It can appear on its own or as part of a disease affecting other parts of your body. As the condition is not always detected, numbers affected are uncertain, but estimated at about 1% of the male adult population and 1.5% of females.

Lichen planus is not an infectious disease. It is impossible to 'catch' from someone who has it or give it to someone else. The disease is not a form of cancer. It does not appear to be inherited and is not nutrition related. We do not know the cause of Lichen Planus with most patients. It may be a sign of a mild weakness in the body's immune (defence) system, but patients with lichen planus are usually fit and well. Occasionally it can be caused by a reaction to medicines such as some painkillers, diabetic treatments, drugs for high blood pressure, beta-blockers, gold, penicillamine and a number of other drugs. Emotional stress and spicy food or citrus fruits can often cause symptoms to worsen.

Lichen planus of the mouth most commonly affects the inside of the cheeks, gums and tongue. Oral lichen planus lasts longer than skin lichen planus. Fortunately, most cases of lichen planus of the mouth cause minimal problems. A few people who have oral lichen planus also have skin lichen planus. Oral lichen planus typically appears as patches of fine white lines and dots. These changes usually do not cause symptoms. They are often found by the dentist during a routine check-up, the patient being completely unaware of the problem. More severe forms of oral lichen planus cause painful sores and ulcers in the mouth. Often a biopsy of affected tissue is needed to confirm a diagnosis of oral lichen planus.

A biopsy is a very simple procedure, done under a local anaesthetic, where a small piece of tissue is removed from the mouth. The area usually heals within 7 to 10 days. Sometimes blood tests along with a biopsy are needed. It is also important to make sure that the sores are not caused by a yeast or herpes infection. There have been cases of lichen planus-like allergic reactions to dental materials but they are very rare. While there are many theories to explain lichen planus, many doctors believe it can be classified as an autoimmune disease. This means the inflammatory cells that normally fight germs attack normal parts of the skin and mucous membranes.

There is no known cure for oral lichen planus. The good news is that the disease often causes no pain or burning and treatment may not be needed. More severe forms of lichen planus - those with pain, burning, redness, blisters, sores and ulcers can be treated with a variety of medications, both applied to the sores (topical) and taken by mouth (oral). It is very important to keep a watchful eye on oral lichen planus. As with any disease of the lining of the mouth, lichen planus can lead to poor dental hygiene and gum disease. We would recommend regular visits to the dentists for examination and cleaning.

Spicy foods, citrus juices, tomato products, caffeinated drinks like coffee and cola and crispy foods like toast and potato crisps should be decreased or eliminated from the diet as they can aggravate lichen planus and interfere with its ability to heal.

There may be some connection between oral lichen planus and cancer of the mouth. The exact connection between

oral lichen planus and cancer is not certain, and only a very few patients with oral lichen planus ever have such complications. When lichen planus is very severe and long standing, especially if the underside of the tongue is involved, there appears to be a slightly increased risk of developing oral cancer. Because of this increased risk of oral cancer, it is recommended that patients with oral lichen planus discontinue the use of alcohol and tobacco products, which also increase the risk.

As the cause is usually not known it is impossible to stop oral lichen planus happening. To avoid the risk of serious disease of the lining of your mouth: • don't smoke • don't drink large amounts of alcohol • do have a diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Everyone, whether they have oral lichen planus or not, should clean their teeth regularly twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. They should also have their teeth and gums checked regularly by a dentist so that any changes in the lining of the mouth can easily be spotted.

As always if you have any worries, concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at The Dental Centre.



White plaque of oral lichen planus



Ulcers of ulcerative lichen planus



Sore gums in erosive lichen planus

### Visiting the Dental Hygienist

At The Dental Centre we have two dental hygienists. Imran 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 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 can carry out this type of work. However, the hygienist has also 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 blooming Spring.  
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)*

