

# The Rickmansworth Dental Centre

## Newsletter

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Issue 6, Winter 2002

Welcome to the sixth 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

As 2002 draws to a close, our aim for 2003 is to become a member of the British Dental Association's Good Practice scheme. We have already started working towards acceptance into the scheme, the basis of which is the following ten commitments:

1. We aim to provide dental care of consistently good quality, for all patients.
2. We only provide care that meets your needs and wishes.
3. We aim to make your treatment as comfortable and convenient as possible.
4. We look after your general health and safety while receiving dental care.
5. We follow the British Dental Association's guidelines on infection control.
6. We check for mouth cancer and tell you what we find.
7. We take part in continuing professional development to keep our skills and knowledge up to date.
8. We train all staff in practice-wide work systems and review training plans once a year.
9. We welcome feedback and deal promptly with any complaints.
10. Every member of the practice is aware of the need to work safely under General Dental Council guidelines. To comply with each commitment, the practice must satisfy a number of relevant standards, all of which are based upon a consensus of what is regarded as good practice by the profession. It may take several months to complete all the necessary work to be accepted onto the scheme, but it is our way of showing that you are getting the best care and attention possible.

### Thank You

Adam and his wife, Natasha, would like to thank everyone for all their kind wishes on the birth of their daughter Abigail, in May.



### Welcome

A big welcome to our new nurse, Sarah, who started with us in October. In case you're wondering; it's a New Zealand accent you can hear.



### Christmas Opening

The Rickmansworth Dental Centre will be open during the Christmas season as follows:

- Friday 20th December - Closing early for staff training
- Saturday 21st & Sunday 22nd December - Closed
- Monday 23rd December - Open 9am. to 5pm.
- Tuesday 24th December - Open 9am. to 1pm.
- Wednesday 25th December to Sunday 29th December - Closed
- Monday 30th December - Open 9am. to 5pm.
- Tuesday 31st December - Open 9am. to 1pm.
- Wednesday 1st & Thursday 2nd January - Closed
- From Friday 3rd January - Usual



### Dental Hygienist

In May, Donna, our new dental hygienist started at the practice. There is information about the hygienist and what she does on the back of this newsletter.



### Focus On Jaw Problems

#### What is dental occlusion?

Dental occlusion is another name for the way your teeth meet when your jaws bite together.

#### What is TMJ?

The letters TMJ are short for 'temporo-mandibular joint', which is the joint connecting your lower jaw and your skull. The movement in this joint lets you open and close your mouth and chew from side to side.

#### What kind of problems might I have?

If your teeth don't fit together properly, you can have problems not only in your teeth themselves, but also the gums, the temporo-mandibular joint or the muscles that move your jaw. These problems are called 'occlusal' problems.

**Teeth**-Teeth that are out of line, heavily worn or constantly breaking, fillings that fracture or crowns that work loose may all be signs of occlusal problems. Your teeth may also be tender to bite on or may ache constantly.

**Gums**-Loose teeth or receding gums can be made worse by a faulty bite.

**TMJ**-Clicking, grinding or pain in your jaw joints, ringing or buzzing in your ears and

difficulty in opening or closing your mouth could all be due to your teeth not meeting each other properly.

**Muscles**-If your jaw is in the wrong position, the muscles that move the jaw have to work a lot harder and can get tired. This leads to muscle spasm. The main symptoms are continual headaches or migraine, especially first thing in the morning; pain behind your eyes; sinus pain and pains in your neck and shoulders. Sometimes even back muscles are involved.

#### How can I tell if I have a problem?

You may find that you clench or grind your teeth, although most people who do aren't aware of it. Sometimes this can be caused by anxiety, but generally most people clench their teeth when they are concentrating on a task - housework, gardening, car mechanics, typing and so on.

You may wake up in the morning with a stiff jaw or tenderness when you bite together.

This could be due to clenching or grinding your teeth in your sleep. Most people who grind their teeth do it while they are asleep and may not know they are doing it.

If you suffer from severe headaches, or neck and shoulder pain, you may not have linked this with possible jaw problems. Or you may keep having pain or discomfort on the side of your face around your ears or jaw joints or difficulty in moving your jaw. These are all symptoms of TMJ problems.

If you are missing some teeth at the back of your mouth, this may lead to an unbalanced bite, which can cause uneven pressure on your teeth.

Together, all these symptoms are called 'TMJ syndrome'.

#### How are occlusal problems treated?

See Dr. Deitsch. He may be able to help you or may refer you to a specialist who deals with occlusal problems.

Often it is possible to spot the signs of an occlusal problem. Various muscles may be sore when tested, or the broken and worn areas of your teeth will show you are grinding your teeth - a common sign of an incorrect bite.

If Adam suspects that your problems are due to an incorrect bite, he may help to diagnose the problem by supplying a temporary soft nightguard or hard plastic appliance that fits over your upper or lower teeth. This



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position where your muscles are relaxed. You may have to wear this all the time or just at night. If the appliance relieves your symptoms then your bite may need to be corrected permanently.

#### **Tooth Adjustment (equilibration)**

Your teeth may need to be carefully adjusted to meet evenly. Changing the direction and position of the slopes that guide your teeth together can often help to reposition the jaw.

#### **Replacement of teeth**

The temporo-mandibular joint needs equal support from both sides of both jaws. The chewing action is designed to work properly only when all your teeth are present and in the correct position. Missing teeth may need to be replaced either with a partial denture or bridgework.

Relief in some patients is instant. In others it can take a long time.

#### **Medication**

Some drugs can help in certain cases, but

this is usually only temporary. Hormone replacement therapy may also help some women.

#### **Diet and Exercise**

As with any joint pain, it can help to put less stress on the joint. So a soft diet can be helpful, as can corrective exercises and external heat. Physiotherapy exercises can often help.

#### **Relaxation**

Counselling and relaxation therapy may help in some cases. These techniques help the patient to become more aware of stressful situations and to control tension.

#### **Will straightening my teeth help?**

If your teeth are too far out of line or in a totally incorrect bite position, it may be necessary to fit an orthodontic appliance to move them into a better position.

#### **How many people suffer from these problems?**

Up to 1 in 4 people may have some symptoms. Both men and women are

affected equally, although women tend to seek treatment more often than men do. The symptoms can often start with the menopause or other hormonal changes.

Many people have imperfect occlusion and missing teeth, yet never have symptoms because they adjust to their problems.

Occasionally, in times of increased stress and tension, the symptoms may appear and then go away immediately. Or, your teeth and gums may be affected straight away and instead of headaches, you may suffer:

- flattened, worn teeth
- broken teeth, fillings and crowns
- loose teeth
- continual sensitivity of your teeth to temperature change
- toothache with no apparent cause.

If you think you have any of these problems or other dental queries, please ask Dr.

## **Visiting the Dental Hygienist**

At The Dental Centre we now have a dental hygienist. Donna, our new hygienist, 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.



*Adam Deitsch and all the staff at The Dental Centre wish you and your families Season's Greetings and a healthy and happy New Year.*

