



# WORD OF MOUTH

MAGAZINE



**Oral Health  
Foundation**  
Better oral health for all

**ISSUE 92 | JUNE 2021** This month we continue to raise awareness about the importance of good oral health during National Smile Month. Our charity campaign is all about highlighting the importance of good oral health.



## Editor's Welcome

Hello and welcome to a brand-new issue of Word of Mouth – the Oral Health Foundation's digital magazine. This edition is dedicated to all things National Smile Month as it celebrates its 42nd birthday.

It's a been a year since we last produced an edition of our Word of Mouth magazine and we apologise for the delay however we hope you really enjoy this packed issue.

National Smile Month offers such a great opportunity to spread positivity and vital oral health messages and it's been great to see the public and dental professionals alike coming together to support it - whether it's through our Smiley Monster Competition or our Great British Brushathon.

If you haven't yet taken steps towards a healthier mouth then please take this as in invitation to do so. Improving your oral health has so many benefits, not just for your mouth but the rest of your body too. Healthier teeth and gums can boost your mental health and well-being as well as your reducing risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and dementia.

For those who've got involved in National Smile Month this year I'd like to say a big thank you. Every year we are bowled over by the enthusiasm and creativity of our fantastic supporters, without whom the campaign would not be where it is today. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.



**Stephen Loat**  
Editor, Word of Mouth

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# Pandemic Smiles

New survey data collected by the Oral Health Foundation and Align Technology has found the profound impact of the pandemic on the way UK adults view their smiles.

More than half (58%) of British adults have changed the way they see their smile as a result of online video calls. A third (33%) now more aware of the colour of their teeth and nearly a quarter (24%) more conscious about the alignment of their teeth.

The new research, released as part of National Smile Month, shows that one-in-ten (11%) UK adults feels self-conscious seeing their smile during an online meeting or video call.

Dr. Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, believes the growth and increased use of digital technologies has led to an increased exposure of the smile.

“Physical interactions have been limited over the last 12 months, and for many, have been replaced with gatherings online. This technology has been an invaluable tool, whether it be facilitating business meetings or allowing grandparents to see their new-born grandchildren for the first time.

“It has also led to us seeing our own face, and smile, far more than we are used to.”

The smile is one of the most important assets we have and is how we communicate our thoughts, emotions and feelings towards one another.

Because of its prominence, and importance, the smile can also be a great source of concern for some people.

“The colour and shape of our teeth are the first things we tend to notice and feeling self-conscious is quite normal.

“What we must remember, however, is that the most important part of the smile, is its health,” adds Dr Carter.

A healthy mouth can be achieved through an effective oral health routine at home as well as regular dental visits.

The key components of an effective oral health routine are brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste for two minutes, cleaning in between the teeth daily with interdental brushes or floss and cutting down on how much and how often you have sugary foods and drinks.

Maintaining a healthy smile is

at the heart of National Smile Month – a charity campaign by the Oral Health Foundation. Taking place between 17 May and 17 June, National Smile Month is an opportunity for everybody to gain more confidence about their smile by learning the basics behind having good oral health.

The Oral Health Foundation and Align Technology survey also revealed how the pandemic has affected development of new social connections.

Nearly two-in-three (58%) UK adults surveyed say smiling is important in developing friendships and relationships and believe covering the smile with face mask during the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on forming connections.

As many as 62% of female respondents confirmed that they have been struggling to form connections with others following the introduction of face masks.

Dan Parsons, marketing director UKI, Align Technology, believes that National Smile Month provides many people with a





chance to reflect on their smile and take practical steps towards a healthier and happier future.

“As the UK starts to gradually ease restrictions and come out of the pandemic, many of us are finding more reasons to smile again. We are proud to partner with National Smile Month, supporting the efforts of consumers for a healthy, beautiful smile.

Parsons adds: “Most people don’t realise that straighter teeth is not just about good aesthetics; they also contribute to better overall hygiene, gum health, potentially less tooth wear and overall longer and sustained tooth health.

“Our research data shows that many respondents are still hiding their smiles. If that includes you, then please take National Smile Month as your

chance to change that. By taking practical steps to better oral health – including proper cleaning and flossing, regular dental check-ups – or teeth straightening, if your teeth are crooked, you can enjoy the positive and connection-forming benefits that come with a healthy and happy smile.”

For more information about National Smile Month, including how to get involved in this year’s campaign, head to [www.smilemonth.org](http://www.smilemonth.org). If anyone requires dental advice or information they can also call our Dental Helpline on 01788 539780\*. The confidential Helpline is manned by oral health professionals and is open between 9am – 5pm from Monday to Friday.

# Check out The Oral Health Podcast streaming now on all platforms

## Listen to The Oral Health Podcast



Search for **The Oral Health Podcast** on all major streaming sites





# Young people lead the way in oral health **during lockdown**

While we have been stuck indoors, young people have been leading the way, with many saying their oral health habits improved over lockdown.



One-in-five Brits (20%) said that they had developed the habit of brushing their teeth for longer during the pandemic. Young people in particular stated they took up better brushing habits during the pandemic with over a quarter (27%) of 18-24-year-olds saying that they brushed their teeth for longer compared to just over one in ten (13%) over 55s.

Similar results were also seen with other beneficial oral health measures on top of brushing your teeth twice daily, such as using mouthwash. Approximately one-in-seven (14%) of Brits said that they had used mouthwash more during the pandemic.

So, with data suggesting that many Brits have found it easier to look after their oral health at home, what happens when you are out and about? Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, believes that chewing sugar-free gum could be a possible solution.

Dr Carter says: "When it comes to oral health on the go chewing sugar-free gum can provide a

handy boost. Chewing sugar-free gum encourages saliva flow, the body's natural defence to acids from food and drinks.

"By keeping some handy in a draw in the office, or in your coat pocket or handbag, you'll always have an oral health pick-me-up right at your fingertips.

"As well as sugar-free gum you could also keep a small travel-size bottle of mouthwash in a drawer or your coat pocket. By making a mental note to use the mouthwash straight after lunch or have some sugar-free gum you can start cement the habit and ensure that your oral health remains in top shape throughout the day."

As well as highlighting good practice when it comes to oral health on the go, it's important to highlight bad practice too.

Our most recent data on the issue shows that many Brits use unhygienic and potentially damaging methods to clean between their teeth on the go. For example, one in ten Brits (10%) admit to using a business

card to clean between their teeth. Shockingly, the equivalent of around 2 million Brits have admitted to using the back of an earring to interdentally clean.

As a proud sponsor of National Smile Month, the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme are keen to promote the benefits of good oral health on the go.

David Henderson, Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme Manager says: "As lockdown restrictions ease and we are able to cautiously return to doing the things we all love, we must continue to look after our oral health.

"As we enter a 'new normal', our oral healthcare routines must also adapt, ensuring that alongside brushing twice daily with fluoridated toothpaste, additional measures are taken to help prevent tooth decay.

"Chewing sugarfree gum after eating and drinking is an easy and enjoyable way to look after your smile on the go, and it is supported by dental professionals."

The Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme is delighted to continue our support for National Smile Month for the 8th consecutive year. The campaign plays an essential role in ensuring that the public are aware of the importance of good oral health routines."

Maintaining good oral health is at the heart of National Smile Month which runs until 17 June.

This fun and positive campaign has a whole host of activities and competitions that the whole family can get involved in. For more information visit [www.smilemonth.org](http://www.smilemonth.org).

For more information about the fantastic work of the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme head to [wrigleyoralhealthcare.co.uk](http://wrigleyoralhealthcare.co.uk).

# The truth about thumb-sucking and oral health

By Jo Bates, founder of Thumbsie®

National Smile Month provides a fantastic opportunity to promote the importance of good oral health to people of all ages and backgrounds. As the Oral Health Foundation said last year, in an exclusive article for Thumbsie's website, National Smile Month allows us to "engage children on the importance of a healthy mouth and how they can achieve it, even at a young age."

I couldn't agree more and believe Thumbsie® has a vital role to play in that engagement with children and in promoting good oral health decisions.

Through Thumbsie® I have seen first-hand the positive difference that proactive oral health care can make, especially when it comes to children.

## How thumb-sucking can negatively affect children's oral health

The act of thumb sucking is a natural reflex for a child and many children start when they are in the womb. Problems only typically arise when thumb sucking becomes prolonged and lasts well beyond

infancy. It is then that oral health issues start to become apparent.

According to the British Orthodontic Society, if the thumb sucking habit stops by the age of seven then teeth can often correct themselves with normal growth.

However, evidence suggests that one in every eight children between the ages of seven and eleven have a prolonged digit sucking habit. If the habit continues beyond the age of seven, then the position of the adult teeth can be permanently affected, and self-correction is less likely to occur.

This makes it all the more important that thumb sucking is stopped in its tracks at an early age.

As the British Orthodontic Society has shown, if thumb sucking becomes a long-term habit the impact on oral health can be severe and long-term. Problems which can arise include a crossbite, an anterior open bite, misshapen palette and even difficulty with chewing.

And it is not just the British Orthodontic Society who have acknowledged the impact of thumb sucking on oral health. There is a growing body of evidence from a wide array of sources.

Iranian experts have noted that thumb sucking can lead to "significant complications such as speech impairment, irregularities in teeth, malocclusion, intra-oral ulcers".

In the US, the National Institutes of Health has said that "anterior open bite and posterior cross bite are the most frequent malocclusions associated with prolonged sucking habits". While the Mayo Clinic states that thumb sucking can "affect the roof of the mouth or how the teeth line up".

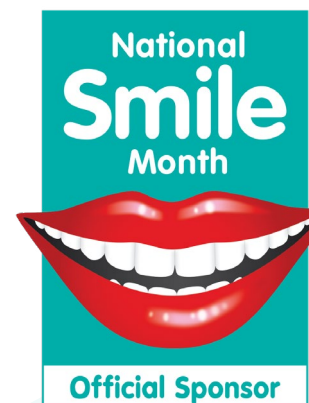
And organisations including the American Dental Association and the Journal of Dentistry, Medicine and Medical Sciences have also published articles advocating the use of thumb guards.

## Why good oral health is so important for young children

Research by the Oral Health Foundation has found that over half of UK adults (51%) said that they'd taken their oral health for granted when they were younger. It highlights the importance of equipping our children with the tools to maintain a healthy mouth but also taking the time to educate them on why it's so important.

By instilling good oral health in children from a young age you can set them up with a healthy smile for life. A healthy smile is one of the best gifts an adult can give their child which not will not only save them from painful treatments down the line but could also boost their confidence and self-esteem.

For more information about Thumbsie head to [www.thumbsie.co.uk](http://www.thumbsie.co.uk)





# Dentistry tops list of most delayed health services

New research collected by the Oral Health Foundation has found further evidence of an NHS dental service in crisis.

“

If you have not seen a dentist since the beginning of the pandemic, I would urge you to give them a call and enquire about an appointment.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE  
Chief Executive  
Oral Health Foundation



The oral health charity is now calling on ministers to promptly address the issue of backed up dental appointments and provide the support NHS dentistry needs to get back on track.

A survey of over 2,000 British adults has found that almost half (45%) reported delays to their dental appointments or treatments in the last 12 months. This is more than any other health service including GP surgeries (30%), hospital services (16%) and mental health support (11%).

Latest figures suggest that as many as 20 million dental appointments have been delayed or cancelled since March 2020.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the Oral

Health Foundation, believes that vital funding and support is needed for NHS dentistry to avoid the nation sleepwalking into an oral health crisis.

Dr Carter says: “Dentistry has been severely underfunded for many years and services have suffered greatly during the pandemic. To address the backlog caused by COVID-19 restrictions, and to ensure dentistry does not fall behind other crucial health services, now is the time for government to provide more funding and invest in the nation’s oral health.

“Regular dental visits are key for maintaining good oral health. Dentists can spot oral health problems in the early stages and provide patients with advice and care that can save them from both invasive and expensive treatments later down the line.

“Dentists also conduct potentially life saving mouth cancer checks as part of every routine appointment. Many people are unaware when it comes to mouth cancer symptoms and how to look for it and therefore the only mouth cancer check they’d get is when they have their regular appointment.”



# Every penny we raise goes towards helping people achieve a healthy smile

As a result of delays to dentistry over the last year, one-in-ten (12%) people have accessed remote dentistry services in the last 12 months. This includes telephone advice, video calls and emails with their dental team.

Despite the ease of remote advice services, three-in-four (74%) say they prefer physical appointments with their dental team. This was much higher than for general health, where just over half (59%) said that they would prefer physical appointments.

Despite a reduction in services over the last year, the charity is keen to get more Brits back into the dental chair. Dr Carter wants to emphasise that while dental practices have suffered several challenges during the pandemic, they have adapted well and ready see more patients.

Dr Carter adds: "Dental professionals have done an excellent job adapting during the pandemic in spite of very difficult challenges. The good news is that many dentists, dental

hygienists and therapists, are now able to see far more patients than they were last summer, and the range of treatments available should be back to normal.

"If you have not seen a dentist since the beginning of the pandemic, I would urge you to give them a call and enquire about an appointment. Regular dental visits are crucial for maintain a good standard of oral health and can identify problems long before they become more serious."

The research has been commissioned by the Oral Health Foundation as part of National Smile Month – a charity campaign championing the benefits of good oral health and a healthy smile.

Throughout National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation and its partners are looking to support the nation in taking steps to improve their oral health. The charity is highlighting that while dental visits remain essential for a healthy mouth, the cornerstone to good oral health remains at home.

Everybody deserves to have good oral health.

By donating to the Oral Health Foundation you are helping the most vulnerable people to achieve a healthier life through better oral health.

We are an entirely self-funded charity so every penny counts. Please donate today.

[www.dentalhealth.org/donate](http://www.dentalhealth.org/donate)



# Caring for our oral health (and the environment too)

In this article we discuss the issue of single use plastic and the work that is being done to promote better oral health that doesn't come at the cost of the planet.

When we think about how we care for our mouth, it might be easy to think that there is little in common between our oral health and the environment – but that's not quite true. In addition to turning off the tap when brushing (which saves us a staggering 12 litres of water each time), there's an important connection that applies to all of us – and it revolves around our toothbrush.

Toothbrushes form a part of our daily routine. Twice a day, morning and night, for two minutes, they help clean our teeth and keep our mouth fit and healthy.

Despite this, the shelf-life of a toothbrush is a relatively short one. In theory, we should only use each one 180 times, for a total of six hours over a period of three months.

It all means that in the UK, around 256 million toothbrushes are bought and discarded every

year. That's a very big pile of plastic so what can we do about it?

As part of National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation and TePe have joined forces to address some of the most urgent environmental issues in oral health.

## Sourcing the right plastics

Plastics are a key material in toothbrushes for many reasons. They are flexible for moulding, have good durability and easy to keep clean.

However, manufacturing, transportation, and disposability are all well-known issues that can have damaging effects on the environment.

That's why we must rethink our approach to plastics. One of the most common and useful types of plastic is recycled plastic, however, it's not always ideal for oral health products. This



is because it may contain hazardous materials that cannot come into contact with the mouth.

Because of this, it's unlikely that recycled plastics in their current form can make their way into our toothbrushes... however, they often make for great packaging choices!

Oral health is currently embracing an exciting shift in the use of renewable plastics, like biobased plastic. These are made from plants such as sugar cane and the castor oil plant.

This is a positive move. It takes us away from fossil-based plastics and helps create a smaller carbon footprint. TePe are continuously looking for sustainable sourcing solutions, like sugar cane, which has a near negligible footprint.

They are a great example of an oral care company choosing the right types of plastic. TePe use renewable energy for all their products, which

means no emissions are released during the manufacturing process.

## Being carbon neutral and product lifespan

Tackling climate change and the impact that comes with global warming is a challenge that all of us must take seriously. Carbon emissions contribute to climate change and cause shrinking water supplies, increasing incidence of severe weather, and changes to the food supply.

One of the most important steps here is to lower our carbon emissions and become more fossil-free in our energy use.

The Oral Health Foundation and TePe are committed to achieving the UN Goals of climate change, with the latter taking on the challenge to reach for carbon neutrality in products and



# Download and share our oral health & sustainability infographic

## Oral Health & Sustainability

When we think about how we care for our mouth, it might be easy to think that there is little in common between our oral health and the environment – but that's not quite true.

As part of National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation and TePe have teamed up to look at some of the most interesting stats when it comes to our toothbrushes, and what they may be doing to our planet.



3

The number of months before you should **change** your toothbrush.



324

The amount of toothbrushes a person **uses** during their life.



256

The number of million toothbrushes used and **discarded** in the UK every year.

This brand new infographic we have created alongside TePe, looks at some of the most interesting stats when it comes to our toothbrushes, and what they may be doing to our planet.

[Download here](#)



**Oral Health  
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packaging in 2022. This target is highly admirable, and it is now up to other oral care manufacturers and suppliers to follow suit.

Becoming carbon neutral requires vast changes in how organisations work. While these are being forged, it is important that manufacturers look more closely at extending the life of their products

Improving sustainability and prolonging the lifespan of oral care products is crucial if we are going to turn the tide on the environmental impact of plastics. Creating less waste is a key priority for change.

## Reusing our plastics

Extending the life of a toothbrush is not only a responsibility that oral care companies have – individuals and families can also make a difference.

Our findings show that four-in-five (80%) of us use our old toothbrush for an alternative purpose, which is great for the environment.

Scrubbing bathroom tiles is the most popular use (40%). Not surprisingly, cleaning is the most common theme.

Almost a third (28%) of us use our past toothbrushes to assist in cleaning various kitchen appliances, more than a quarter (26%) to give an extra glimmer to our jewellery and roughly one-in-five (18%) use the oral hygiene product to shine our shoes.

Other popular uses include cleaning bike and car

wheels, computer keyboards, toilets and toilets seats, fish tanks and fingernails. A clean sweep all-round!

A toothbrush can perform many functions around the home after it's time cleaning teeth and gums are over. More toothbrushes now have 'end-rounded', nylon bristles, which have been preferable to natural bristles for some time due to better quality and size control. The grip of the handle is another factor which makes the toothbrush a formidable cleaning tool. Unlike scouring pads, which can be tricky to get a hold of, particularly when wet, the toothbrush's handle should be comfortable to hold.

Being better at reusing our old plastics is an easy and effortless way to extend the lifespan of our old toothbrushes and be a bit more environmentally friendly.

## Another reason to smile

So, there we have it – a brief insight into oral health and environmental challenges. The Oral Health Foundation and TePe are both committed to driving change within the industry. From the materials being used, to packaging, the transportation and manufacturing of products, as well as their lifespan. These are all actions that feed into a bigger picture and give us all another reason to smile.

Our goal is simple. To live in a clean world where people are free of dental disease. A healthy planet for a healthy smile.







# Report reveals concerns into brushing habits

One-in-four (26%) British adults regularly brush their teeth only once a day, according to findings of a new nationwide poll.

The data, collected by the Oral Health Foundation, sheds concerns about the number of people willing to skip twice-daily brushing.

The charity is worried by the number of people who regularly fail to brush their teeth last thing at night, when the health of the mouth is most likely to deteriorate. Insights from the research show that one-in-four (25%) do not brush their teeth in the evening before they go to bed.

Latest figures show two-in-three (66%) UK adults have visible plaque, almost one-in-three (31%) have signs of tooth decay, and three-in-four (74%) have had teeth extracted.

The examination into Britain's brushing habits is part of National Smile Month, a campaign that aims to raise awareness about the importance of a healthy mouth.

Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the charity, highlights the importance of twice daily brushing and believes now is the perfect time for the UK to reassess its oral health habits.

Dr Carter says: "Twice-daily toothbrushing is the cornerstone to having good oral health because it removes plaque. If plaque is not removed and is allowed to build up, it can cause conditions like tooth decay and gum disease.

"Brushing only once a day can increase the chances of developing tooth decay by up to a third, so setting aside time for the second brush is really important."

Elaine Tilling, dental hygienist and the clinical education manager for TePe Oral Hygiene Products, says: "Apart from stale bedtime breath, failing to brush before bed will also lead to poorer oral health.

"During sleep we lose the function of saliva, the mouth's protection against tooth decay. The night-time brush removes the daily build-up of plaque and food debris from the surface of the teeth and

gums and helps to ensure that whilst the mouth is at rest, the damage potential from plaque bacteria is removed."

Further findings from the charity's research show that toothbrush skipping is more common in adults under 35s (31%), while men are less likely to brush their teeth twice-daily compared to women.

It also suggests that as many as one million UK adults fail to brush their teeth once a day.

The investigation also revealed that most of the population (70%) brush at least twice a day, however, one-in-ten (10%) have no set routine.

"Habits need routine to help them form and toothbrushing is no different," adds Mrs Tilling, who believes creating a fixed routine is essential for forming healthy habits.

She says: "Brushing before bed is arguably the most important time to remove plaque and night-time is generally when we have the most time for ourselves. Ensuring brushing and interdental cleaning before bed is crucial for good oral health."

Throughout National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation and its partners are looking to support everyone take steps to improve their oral health.

"A healthy smile can be achieved at home with a simple and easy daily routine," Dr Carter says.

"The most important action you can take is to brush your teeth for two minutes, last thing at night and one other time during the day, with a fluoride toothpaste. It also means cleaning between your teeth every day with interdental brushes or floss and also cutting down how much and how often you have sugary foods and drinks.

"Dental disease is largely preventable. Following these steps will set you up on the path for a lifetime of good oral health."



# Top ten foods to keep your dentist happy

By Daniela, a registered nutritionist from Health Nutritionist

Have you ever wondered which foods could help keep you away from dental interventions?

Good oral health is vital for our eating and digestion, as well as for our self-esteem and confidence to socialise.

Diet is considered one of the main factors for tooth decay and enamel erosion. Poor nutrition also plays a role in the development of our teeth, as well as susceptibility to periodontal diseases and oral cancer. Let's take a look at the top foods that look after our oral health.

## 1. Dairy

It probably comes at no surprise that dairy such as cheese, milk and yogurt are among the top allies to help maintain good oral health.

Dairy products contain proteins and mineral such as calcium and phosphorous, which are two of the main structural components of our teeth and play an important role in their maintenance.



## 2. Tofu and other plant-based dairy alternatives

Tofu is naturally high in protein and, like cheese, it contains lots of calcium. Tofu is also high in magnesium – which is another structural component essential for the normal functioning of our teeth.

Plant-based milks are commonly fortified with calcium and vitamin D, however, it is always important to check the label.

## 3. Eggs

Eggs are great sources of vitamin D, which is essential for the maintenance of healthy teeth.

We need vitamin D to keep our teeth healthy as it helps our bodies 'lock in' the calcium from our diets as it passes through our small intestine and even helps our bodies pass calcium to our bones.

## 4. Meat and seafood

Both meat and seafood are excellent sources of protein, but red meat and fish also contain

lots of fatty acids and vitamin D which can benefit our oral health.

Seafood is also a great source of fluoride. Other sources of fluoride include water and black tea.

## 5. Berries and citrus fruits

Strawberries, oranges and grapefruits are great sources of vitamin C.

Vitamin C is essential for normal collagen formation for the normal function of teeth and gums and is found in a variety of fruits and vegetables, including peppers and broccoli.

## 6. Green leafy vegetables

Leafy greens such as kale, spinach and cabbage contain a range of beneficial vitamins and minerals including calcium, phosphorous, vitamin C and vitamin A, which are all essential for a healthy smile. That whiter teeth is considered more than twice as desirable as having healthy gums.



# Your mouth matters. The Oral Health Foundation is here for you.

We care about your oral health.

That's why, every year, we support thousands of people to help them achieve a healthier life through better oral health.

If you need help, or are in need of dental advice then call our Dental Helpline on 01788 539780 or email [helpline@dentalhealth.org](mailto:helpline@dentalhealth.org)

[www.dentalhealth.org](http://www.dentalhealth.org)

## 7. Carrots, peppers and sweet potatoes

Yellow, orange, red and green fruits and vegetables are excellent sources of Vitamin A in the form of  $\beta$ -carotene. Other good sources include eggs, oily fish, liver and dairy products.

## 8. Wholegrains

Wholegrains such as wheat bread, rice, buckwheat, quinoa, rye, oats and cereals contain high amount of fibre.

It has been suggested that fibre can reduce the absorption of sugars and stimulate saliva production, which helps wash away acids and food particles.

## 9. Nuts

Nuts contain high amounts of protein and unsaturated fat, in addition to a wide variety of vitamins and minerals, among which magnesium and phosphorous.

Nuts are also among the foods that stimulate salivary flow due to the mechanical action of chewing.

## 10. Sugar substitutes

Sugar is one of the biggest causes of tooth decay and cutting it from our diet where we can is a really simple way of making sure we're doing all we can to decrease our changes of cavities.

Opting for sugar substitutes such as stevia, aspartame, erythritol and mannitol can help decrease the risk of tooth decay.

In addition, chewing sugar-free gum after meals helps our mouths produce saliva and neutralise the acids left behind after eating.





# The importance of prevention has never been greater

The Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme tell us about the work they are doing to promote prevention and self-management as the pandemic continues to impact on oral health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all aspects of our health, from the exacerbation of health inequalities, to the increased importance of preventative health measures – these concerns are no different in oral healthcare.

Here at the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme, we've been proud to work with dentists and patients alike throughout the pandemic to promote preventative oral health tools while access to in-person treatment has been limited.

Never have campaigns like National Smile Month been as important as they are this year – and we're continuing our support to



promote education and engagement around oral healthcare. Having been involved now for over a decade, we have seen how collaboration across the sector to educate people on the importance of looking after your oral health has impacted patients for the better.

This will remain a necessity throughout the pandemic recovery.

## Impact of the pandemic on dentistry

We recognise how dentists' ability to treat patients has been severely reduced throughout the pandemic.

At the beginning of 2021, the Programme conducted a survey of 420 dental professionals and found that two-thirds (65%) said they didn't expect normal service to resume for another 6 months to a year, demonstrating the ongoing impact the pandemic is having on dentistry – even as we continue to emerge from lockdown.

As a result, 71% of respondents said they had shifted to recommending at-home oral health tools such as floss, mouthwash and sugarfree gum while their patients have been unable to access treatment or attend physical practices.

Commenting on the Programme's survey, Eddie Crouch, Chair of the British Dental Association highlighted how the impact COVID has had on the nation's oral health will be felt for years to come.

He said: "Even before COVID deep health inequalities and access problems were the norm, and now both have been set into overdrive.

'Business as usual' will not be returning any time soon, and policymakers, patients and practitioners all need to make the right choices if we're to avert an oral health crisis."



## Access to dentistry during the pandemic

Patients have also experienced difficulties in accessing dental treatment, and are concerned about the impact on their oral healthcare.

In an additional survey by the Programme of 2000 18–30 year-olds, 65% of respondents confirmed that their access to dental health services had been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has become far more challenging to prevent oral health outcomes such as cavities, which were found to be in the top three oral healthcare priorities for survey respondents.

## Prevention in the age of COVID

Given these challenges, taking steps to prevent poor oral health outcomes is higher on the agenda than ever.

Equipping patients to manage their own oral health when access to dental care is limited is



vital, especially as the dental industry continues to work around the clock to deal with the backlog of patients caused by the pandemic.

### Sugarfree gum - a tool for good oral health

One of the tools people can use to support their dental hygiene and prevent cavities, alongside regular brushing and flossing, is using sugarfree gum when they're on the go and between meals.

The oral care benefits of chewing sugarfree gum are widely recognised – a study of 360 pieces of pre-existing evidence from King's College London found that people who regularly chewed sugarfree gum developed 28% less caries than those who did not, demonstrating the important role it can play in protecting your oral health.

### Celebrating National Smile Month

As part of National Smile Month, the Wrigley Oral Health Programme has sponsored a series of podcasts to promote preventative measures and delve into the impacts of COVID-19 on oral health outcomes.

We encourage everyone to get involved this National Smile Month and beyond – you can check out our podcasts episodes by searching for 'The Oral Health Podcast' on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Souncloud. You can also scan the spotify code on the graphic below using your Spotify app.



### Listen to The Oral Health Podcast



Search for **The Oral Health Podcast** on all major streaming sites and subscribe.

# Whiter teeth rank top of Brit's smile wish list

Most British adults want to change something about their smile and the wish for whiter teeth comes top of that list, according the findings of a new study.

The research, collected by the Oral Health Foundation and Philips shows four-in-five (80%) want to change something about their smile, with the aspiration for whiter teeth shared by four-in-ten (42%) people around the UK.

Tooth whitening is one of the largest growing cosmetic procedures in the UK, with the industry now estimated to be worth over £40million annually.

Melanie Pomphrett, Dental Professional and Spokesperson for Philips, believes a whiter smile has the ability to make people feel more confident and can have a positive impact on many parts of a person's life.

Melanie says: "Tooth whitening is a quick and easy way to improve our appearance and boost confidence. When carried out by a dental professional it is incredibly safe and achieves results that are in keeping with the 'natural look' that many people are looking for.

"The smile is one of our most important physical features, especially when communicating with others. A white smile can improve our state of mind which is important for our social life, career, and relationships.

"Interestingly, when we look at the people who participated in this research, it shows us that, no matter your age, income or marital status, you are equally as likely to be drawn to whitening products and procedures."

The new research has been commissioned as part of National Smile Month, a campaign by the Oral Health Foundation that aims to raise awareness about the importance of good oral health and support Brits in achieving a healthy smile.

Due to the increasing popularity of tooth whitening, the charity is advising people to avoid having dental treatment outside of the dental surgery, following a recent BBC report into the rise of illegal teeth whitening procedures.





“

Cosmetic dentistry can help us achieve a more aesthetically-pleasing smile, but it is key that we continue to invest in our oral health in other ways.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE  
Chief Executive  
Oral Health Foundation

Official figures show the number of illegal teeth whitening procedures in the UK have risen by 26% in the last year. Despite the treatment being offered in beauty salons and kiosks across the UK, teeth whitening can only legally be carried out by a trained dental professional, such as a dentist or hygienist.

Dentist Dr Ben Atkins, President of the Oral Health Foundation, says the potential consequences of having dental treatment by those unqualified to do so are “severe” and could have “lasting consequences” on a person’s health.

Dr Atkins says: “While cosmetic treatments like tooth whitening and orthodontics may seem like relatively easy procedures, they are quite the opposite. These are medical procedures and should only ever be carried out by a dental professional.

“The potential repercussions of having these treatments by a non-trained dental professional can be extremely dangerous. There could be a greater risk of infection and cross contamination, as well as damage to the gums, mouth and even the jaw.”

The BBC investigation into illegal tooth whitening procedures has uncovered several companies who are offering training to unknowing beauticians.

Findings from the new research by the Oral Health Foundation and Philips, show that as many as one-in-seven (16%) British adults have sought tooth whitening treatments outside of the dental practice.

Of equal concern to the charity, figures reveal more than one-in-four (28%) would consider having tooth whitening illegally in beauty salons and high street kiosks.

“Never gamble with your health. Always see a trained and qualified professional for dental treatment of any kind,” adds Dr Atkins.



“These are the kind of consequences that last a lifetime, cause unnecessary pain and suffering, and are highly expensive to correct.”

During National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation and Philips are giving advice and support about how to develop and maintain great oral health. For more information head to [www.smilemonth.org](http://www.smilemonth.org).



# Cleaning between teeth: the secret to a truly healthy smile

Brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste is key for good oral health but interdental cleaning must not be forgotten to get the best out of your smile.

When you think about maintaining a healthy mouth, brushing your teeth should be the top priority. Twice daily toothbrushing with a fluoride toothpaste is the cornerstone to a healthy smile, but there is one simply addition that can truly transform how healthy your mouth is – and that is interdental cleaning.

While toothbrushing is the most effective way to keep your teeth clean, it only reaches 60% of the tooth's surfaces. Using interdental brushes to clean in between the gaps in your teeth is one of the easiest and most important things you can do to change the health of your smile for the better.

That is why, as part of National Smile Month,

the Oral Health Foundation has joined with TePe to give you the very best advice about this simple addition to your oral health routine.

## Why interdental cleaning is so important

Dental plaque can build up between the teeth where a toothbrush cannot get to.

Over time, this can lead to tooth decay, gum inflammation and bad breath. To prevent this from happening it is a good idea to use an interdental brush as part of your daily cleaning routine.

An interdental brush is a small brush specially



designed to clean between your teeth, where a regular toothbrush does not reach. Daily use of an interdental brush, in addition to regular toothbrushing, is an easy and effective way to keep your gums and teeth fresh and healthy.

We recommend cleaning between your teeth every day, to keep your mouth fresh and healthy.

When you first start cleaning between your teeth, your gums may feel a bit sore and might bleed but do not stop because bleeding gums are often a sign of gum inflammation. If you do not notice an improvement within a few days, contact your dental professional.

## Picking the right size

Interdental brushes come in many different sizes, and it can be difficult to know which one is most suitable for your mouth.

For the best advice, ask a dental professional for their recommendation. In the meantime, here are a few tips to get you started....

- Look in the mirror and insert the brush between the teeth, close to the gums.

Start with the smallest size and work up until the brush bristles touch the tooth surface and the gum tissue.

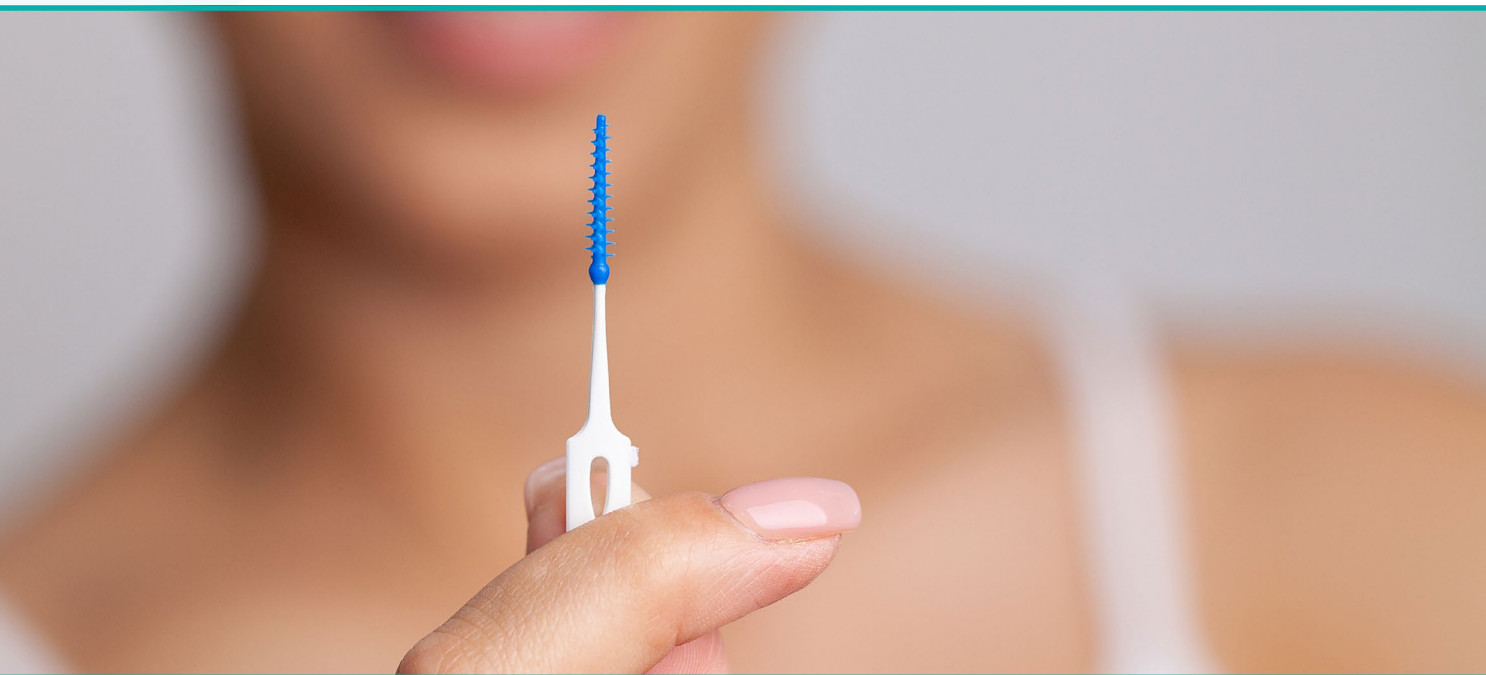
- The brush should have a snug fit but the wire, although plastic coated, should not touch the sides of the teeth or the gums. Never force the brush into a space.
- Once inserted, move the interdental brush to its full length back and forth about 2-3 times. Make sure to clean all the spaces between the teeth once a day.
- You are likely to need two-three different sizes, or the combination of one or two brushes and floss – it all depends on the spaces between the teeth, which normally vary throughout the mouth.

## How to use interdental brushes

To get the most out of interdental cleaning is all about the correct technique.

The good news is that using interdental brushes is relatively easy to pick-up. Once mastered, it is a healthy habit that will last a lifetime





### 1. Use a straight interdental brush between the front teeth

Insert the brush gently between the teeth. Do not force the brush into a space; work it in gently or choose a smaller size.

Move the interdental brush full length back and forth a few times.

### 2. If using a small interdental brush on the back teeth

If you are using a small interdental brush (TePe's pink, orange, red or blue brushes) you

can curve the soft neck slightly. By adding pressure with your finger, it makes it easier to reach between the back teeth. Or try a long handled interdental brush like the TePe Angle™.

### 3. If using a bigger interdental brush on the back teeth

When using interdental brushes of a larger size, access between the back teeth may be improved if you slightly curve the wire. The interdental brush will last longer if you do not straighten or bend the brush at another angle.

## Take control of your oral health during National Smile Month

At its heart, National Smile Month is all about learning what we can do to have a clean and healthy mouth. By being aware of what we can do to develop and maintain good oral health, we can change our life for the better.

For information about interdental cleaning, visit [www.tepe.co.uk](http://www.tepe.co.uk)



# Download and share our oral health & sustainability infographic

Are the UK's oral health habits really something to smile about? This new oral health habits infographic reveals what our research has found out about how British adults are caring for their smile.

**Download [here](#)**

## Oral Health Habits

During National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation and TePe are helping everybody learn what they can do to have a clean and healthy mouth.

But are the UK's oral health habits really something to smile about? Here's what our research says about how British adults are caring for their smile.





# Britain is going electric and here are the top reasons

The Oral Health Foundation, who have been campaigning for better oral health for over 50 years, have done some new research on the nation's brushing habits.

Around two-in-three (68%) value brushing their teeth more than any other part of their daily hygiene routine while more than half (57%) prefer to use an electric toothbrush over a traditional manual one.

But with some electric toothbrushes costing hundreds of pounds, are they worth spending the money on?

As part of National Smile Month, the charity has joined up with Oral-B to reveal some of the top reasons why Brits are switching to electric (and why you should consider switching if you have not already).

## A healthy mouth

Most electric toothbrushes have been made using cutting edge scientific research.

They have been shown to remove up to twice as much plaque compared to a manual toothbrush, which helps reduce the risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

Dr Angela Ly, spokesperson from Oral-B and award-winning dentist explains the difference between electric and manual brushes in a recent episode of the charity's podcast.

Dr Angela says: "An electric

toothbrush will either oscillate and rotate or vibrate which will help remove the plaque from the teeth when brushing.

"When manual brushing you have to move the brush in a certain way to get an effective clean, whereas with an electric brush you hold the brush against the tooth and let the toothbrush do the work... that will be faster and more efficient than anything you can replicate with a manual brush."

## Applying the correct amount of pressure

One of the most common

pitfalls of using electric or manual toothbrushes is scrubbing too hard – which can damage your teeth and gums.

"Because the electric toothbrushes are quite powerful, a lot of people don't realise that the technique you use with an electric brush is different to manual.

"If you're pressing too hard and scrubbing against the teeth it can cause the gums to recede and even erode the enamel – which is irreversible." adds Dr Angela.

To avoid this, most electric toothbrushes come with pressure sensors. Brushes with built-in pressure sensors will

alert you if you are pressing too hard or too soft making it easier to get an even clean without causing potential damage.

## Appropriate for all ages and abilities

According to the charity's data, more than one-in-five (21%) parents give their children electric toothbrushes because they want their child to have the best clean possible, and research shows that this can be extremely beneficial.

Dr Angela says: "Electric toothbrushes, especially the ones from Oral-B, are designed with children in mind. They're gentler, they have smaller

heads so they can reach hidden areas of the mouth effectively, and they're also a lot easier for children to hold as they have bigger handles than a traditional manual toothbrush."

Electric brushes can also be very useful for older people.

Dr Nigel Carter, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, adds: "Various things in our lives and routines change as we age, and brushing isn't an exception.

"Today, people over 65 are more likely to have a larger number of their own teeth than generations before them. Many are even keeping their own teeth well into their





90s. The convenience and effectiveness associated with using a powered toothbrush can be a big aid in helping a person to adapt to and overcome their new brushing challenges – such as loss of dexterity. The handles are thicker, easier to hold, and the oscillating head does most of the work.”

### Loving a gadget

A wealth of technology and science goes into creating an electric toothbrush which gives them many benefits.

This seems to be a deciding factor for many people, as over half (57%) have gone electric solely because of the technology included.

Dr Carter believes many people can benefit from the technology used in electric toothbrushes.

Dr Carter says: “As a minimum, we would recommend that if you’re going to go for an electric toothbrush, you choose one that has a rechargeable battery, a built-in timer and a pressure sensor.

“Mobile apps are also common in the top-end

toothbrushes and can give you lots of insight into your own toothbrushing habits. They’re also educational and can make brushing fun – which is especially important for children.”

Research conducted in previous years has shown that the average brushing time for many adults could be as low as 45 seconds rather than the recommended two minutes.

“Without knowing, many people also fall well short of brushing for two minutes. In-built timers help us to concentrate on brushing all the areas of our mouth for an adequate amount of time.”

Dr Angela adds: “With most electric toothbrushes, the difference in the price is down to the features on the brush. The less expensive models will have maybe just one daily cleaning function – which is more than enough for most people.

Higher end models will have a greater variety of cleaning modes such as a sensitive clean and whitening. The higher price can also indicate a longer battery life.”

### Should you upgrade to an electric brush?

Dr Angela feels that an electric toothbrush, even a lower end model, is a wise purchase for anyone.

“It’s definitely worth upgrading to an electric toothbrush,” Dr Angela says. “You’ll find it different at first as the vibrations can feel a bit strange, but your teeth after a few uses will feel so much cleaner.”

Further findings from the charity show that more than one-in-five (23%) who own an electric brush received it as a present. Dr Carter believes they make a great gift for any member of the family.

Dr Carter adds: “Look at an electric toothbrush as an investment in your health. It might seem like a lot of money to spend in one go now, but you’re getting a much better clean overall and down the line that is going to save you a lot of money in potential decay treatment and dental visits.”

# Brits cast their vote on the one thing they could not go a day without

A nationwide poll has revealed the things Britons have said they could not go a day without and some of the results might surprise you.

Brushing teeth has been ranked top of things Brits could not go a day without doing – according to the findings of a new nationwide poll.

Two-in-three (68%) UK adults say they could not go a day without brushing their teeth, deeming it more than three times as important than exercise (21%), as a daily task. Brushing teeth was also judged to be more essential than eating breakfast (43%) and washing (41%).

The findings are part of new research by the Oral Health Foundation to coincide with National Smile Month – a charity campaign aiming to reduce dental disease by





highlighting the importance of a healthy mouth.

Previous research by the charity suggests that as many as 97% of the population brush their teeth at least once per day.

Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the Oral Health Foundation explains the importance of tooth brushing and why it is so necessary.

Dr Carter says: “For most people, the importance of brushing their teeth has been instilled in them since childhood. Like all habits, the earlier they are developed, the easier they are to keep throughout life.

“Toothbrushing is such a vital habit to get in to so I’m delighted to see it top the list of Britain’s most valued day-to-day tasks.

“Daily brushing and cleaning between your teeth are important because it removes plaque. If the plaque is not removed, it continues to build up, feeding on the bits of food left behind and causing tooth decay and gum disease.”

Tooth decay and gum disease are two of the most common conditions around the world.

In the UK, almost one-in-three (31%) adults have tooth decay while three-in-four (75%) over the age of 35 are affected by gum disease. In total, two-in-three (66%) British adults have visible plaque.

If left untreated, tooth decay and gum disease can lead to tooth loss.

“The best way to prevent tooth decay and gums disease, and keep your teeth for life, is by sticking to an effective oral health routine,” adds Dr Carter.

“Brushing should be done twice a day, with the most important time being last thing at night. Brushing should last two minutes and be done with a fluoride toothpaste.”

Further findings from the charity’s research suggests that, during the pandemic, the health of the mouth has declined far less than other areas of wellbeing.

Only one-in-ten (12%) say their oral health has declined throughout COVID-19 and lockdown – four times less than those who believe the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health



(43%) and weight (42%).

Three times more people believe the pandemic has had a worse effect on their exercise habits (34%) and twice as many believe their sex drive (22%) has declined, compared to their oral health. Nearly twice as many people believe their eyesight (21%) has got worse.

Elaine Tilling, Dental Hygienist and the Clinical Education Manager for TePe Oral Hygiene Products, suggests the pandemic has created a greater desire for self-care and prevention of disease.

Ms Tilling says: “So much has been out of our control during this time but taking responsibility for your own health has been a necessity, which for many people has been a positive experience.

“Dental disease is preventable, and it is the importance of undertaking this that the pandemic has changed. Taking the time needed to brush effectively and to clean between the teeth daily if practiced often enough helps to embed these habits for life.”

Dr Carter adds: “Lockdown has had a significant impact on many people’s physical and mental health.

“The good news for oral health is that it seems to have been relatively pandemic proof, declining far less than other areas of general wellbeing.

“With the exception of regular dental visits, good oral health can be achieved at home.

“Along with keeping an eye on the amount and frequency of sugar consumption and snacking, an oral health routine takes no more than five minutes a day – a relatively short amount of time when measured against the benefits.”

During National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation and its partners will be supporting the UK to achieve a healthier smile.

The charity will be joined by some of the UK’s most well-known household brands, including Listerine, Invisalign, Corsodyl, Pronamel, Oral-B, Philips, TePe and the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme.





# Babycup added to charity's accreditation programme

The Oral Health Foundation is delighted to announce the first open cup specially designed for infants' and toddlers' small hands to gain accreditation from its expert panel.

The charity has given its seal of approval to the Babycup product, which helps aid good oral health in infants by encouraging healthy sipping and natural drinking as well as supporting oral development.

Each product that passes through the charity's panel of experts is awarded an 'Oral Health Foundation Approved' status once their claims have been rigorously checked and effectively verified, including a logo and accreditation document.

Prior to their accreditation, Babycup has won multiple awards - including Made for



Mums Editor's Choice, Prima Baby & Pregnancy Best First Cup, Junior Design Awards Best Baby Feeding Product, and Janey Lee Grace WINNER Best Baby Product - and its small size makes it perfect for little hands. The cup holds 50ml of liquid and has a slim drinking edge designed for young mouths.

The cup is perfect for any infant between 0-2.5 years as it can be used right from birth whether you're express feeding, using formula or a combination of the two. It's much better for oral development than a traditional Sippy cup because it encourages natural sipping instead of prolonged sucking.

Dr Nigel Carter, Oral Health Foundation CEO and dentist for over 40 years welcomes this partnership.

Dr Carter says: "We welcome this new partnership with Babycup and are happy to provide them with accreditation for their cup product. This is the first free drinking cup for tiny hands to be approved by the panel.

"Developing proper drinking habits at an early age is vital for oral development. Primary [milk] teeth are crucial to jaw development, speech development and adult teeth placement.

"Not taking care of primary teeth can lead to adult teeth growing in crooked, chewing difficulties, facial asymmetries and, most importantly, tooth decay."

Founder of Babycup Sara Keel is delighted by the Oral Health Foundation's accreditation.

Sara says: "Receiving the seal of approval from the Oral Health Foundation is a great achievement and recognises the importance of our mini open cups in the eyes of oral healthcare experts. It provides a strong message to parents to choose an open cup when introducing fluids during weaning and gives assurance that Babycup First Cups are perfect for this important stage. Good oral health starts early and we're pleased that this has been highlighted with this accreditation."

There are lots more products approved by the Oral Health Foundation for babies, toddlers and young children, head to our Approved Products page to have a look. To find out more about Babycup visit [www.babycup.co.uk](http://www.babycup.co.uk).

Babycup becomes the latest product to be accredited by The Oral Health Foundation.

Find out more at [www.dentalhealth.org](http://www.dentalhealth.org)







# WORD OF MOUTH

## Magazine

We want to know what sort of content you want to see!

Would you like to know more about gum disease? How about a Q&A with one of our dental experts to answer some of your burning questions? Or perhaps you want to hear more about our fantastic range of educational resources?

Let us know by emailing [pr@dentalhealth.org](mailto:pr@dentalhealth.org)