



WORD OF MOUTH

MAGAZINE



**Oral Health
Foundation**

Better oral health for all

ISSUE 98 | MARCH 2023 Have you taken part in the World Oral Health Day this year? Or maybe tried to quit smoking? Perhaps was aware of International HPV Day? This issue will tell you all about those and many more.

Editor's Welcome

Hello and welcome to a brand-new issue of Word of Mouth – the Oral Health Foundation's digital magazine.

Quite a few things have happened in March... For instance, for International HPV Day some of the dental professionals we work with have outlined and taught the importance of HPV awareness.

Smoking is a big burden not just for the lungs but for the mouth too. Explore how by reading the article on National No Smoking Day.

Have you heard of teledentistry? It is an evolving concept of dentistry but virtually. Have a look at the article about the benefits it can bring to the table and improve oral health outcomes.

And, of course, that's not all. Discover more articles in the issue whenever you get a minute, have a good day, and see you again soon!



Viktoriia Davydenko
Editor, Word of Mouth

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International HPV Day

There is a lot of misinformation surrounding HPV (human papillomavirus). This is why as part of International HPV Day we have been talking to dental professionals, Dr Ben Atkins, and Dr Connie Woodall to learn more about how HPV can affect the mouth and what we can do to help people.

HPV is a very common group of viruses that affect the moist areas of the body, such as the mouth, throat, or genitals. There are 200 different types.

You don't need to have penetrative sex to get HPV, though most of it spreads through some form of sexual contact. HPV is common, most people will get HPV at some point during their life.

HPV infections are often symptomless, so a lot of the time people won't realise they have it.

What are the symptoms of HPV and can it spread?

Connie Woodall

HPV does not usually cause any symptoms or problems and most people do not realise they have it. Sometimes the virus can cause painless growths (warts)

around the vagina, penis, or anus.

HPV is transmitted through skin-skin contact during vaginal, anal, and oral sex - you can have it even if you are not currently sexually active.

Ben Atkins

HPV is a virus, and often we cannot see it. We can sometimes see warts or bumps but that is not always the case. It is transmitted through contact with someone who already has the virus, though it is so common I think nearly everyone will encounter it at some point in their life.

What do you think dental professionals need to know about HPV?

Ben Atkins

Information about HPV risk factors and facts will help

the patient. It is an infection, like any virus, but a good understanding of the facts will make it easier. Honestly, I haven't talked to a patient about HPV in 20 years, partly because no one has asked but I also think it is so unknown. That's part of the reason why I think we really should start talking about it.

Connie Woodall

Many types of HPV affect the mouth and, although most of the time it does not cause a problem, cells can undergo abnormal changes. Low-risk types of HPV can cause genital warts, or no symptoms at all, and typically do not cause cancer. High-risk strains (including HPV 16 and 18) are associated with oropharyngeal cancer.

Oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinomas amongst younger patients without the usual risk factors (smoking and alcohol) are on the rise due to exposure to HPV – this is believed to be

due to an increased number of people engaging in oral sex practices. Up to three-quarters of oropharyngeal cancer cases are caused by HPV.

Ideally, would you want a patient to tell you if they had HPV?

Connie Woodall

Patients should be asked about the infectious virus, including HPV, as part of their medical history and oral cancer screen. This would enable the dentist to give clear and directed information regarding an increased risk of oral cancer and other types of cancers.

Ben Atkins

Realistically, I would ask that they attend regularly as often as they need to. It would not be a case of scaremongering and often you do not actually see the symptoms. Perhaps the odd wart but the discussion could certainly help towards more education for the patient and help. I would want them to feel supported and also not worry them.

How could you help a patient with HPV?

Connie Woodall

Education is the key to empowering patients.

As part of history taking, it is important to ask about infectious diseases such as HPV with an explanation as to why this is important and relevant to their dental health.

Patients with HPV should be reassured of its high prevalence in the community and that it usually results in no symptoms. However, since HPV causes 5% of all cancers, patients must be made aware of the signs and symptoms to

look out for – which they should report to their doctor or dentist as appropriate.

Ben Atkins

I would hope as you would support any other patient, no matter who they are. They should ideally have support with lifestyle smoking and diet. Patients with HPV should not be worried about any stigma, your dental professional will not be judging you, they are just there to help you to keep healthy.

What would you say to a dentist or other part of a dental team who is worried about talking to their patients about HPV?

Connie Woodall

As dentists, we take medical, dental, and social histories daily. This includes sensitive subjects such as alcohol intake, tobacco use, mental health, lifestyle, and infectious disease.

Due to its direct link with head and neck cancers, clinicians should feel confident in asking about HPV status which will help form an overall picture of the patient's oral cancer risk status. Patients can then be given tailored advice regarding prevention and signs/symptoms to look out for.

Ben Atkins

I would advise thinking of it like another infection. Professionals also should understand the facts and risks too. The last thing you would want is to not understand it yourself. As a professional, you should be aware of the journey that HPV goes through. From learning about vaccines, identification, and the risk of HPV itself.



What do you think is a good way to raise awareness of HPV?

Connie Woodall

Cancers linked to HPV include head & neck, cervical, anal, penile, vulval, and vaginal. With HPV causing 5% of all cancers it is vital patients are made aware of the risk factors, mode of spread, and how to protect themselves.

As dentists, we can raise awareness by speaking to our patients in surgery and having information posters in the waiting room. All staff members should be trained in infectious diseases so they can give the relevant information or direct a patient towards a clinician.

We can also use social media to spread accurate information about HPV including links to the Oral Health Foundation website.

Ben Atkins

I think practices taking part in campaigning and raising awareness would go a long way. Social media especially would certainly help to educate the age range themselves and those having or are potentially having children in the future to make sure they get vaccinated. It would be great if there

was a full campaign to help more people with HPV.

How many people do you think do not realise that mouth cancer risk can be reduced with HPV vaccination?

Connie Woodall

In the UK, females have been offered the HPV vaccine since 2008, while males began to be vaccinated in 2019. Many people will not know that this vaccine helps your immune system protect you from getting HPV. Therefore, it is important we ask our child patients whether they have had this vaccine and direct them to the relevant people if they have not.

Ben Atkins

I expect dentists will be far more aware than patients of the risks of HPV and mouth cancer as well as other risk factors. In my career, I think I have found three or maybe four suspicious lesions that have gone on to be identified with mouth cancer. All of these were irregular patients, and both were smokers and alcohol drinkers. Of course, we do not want to worry people, but it shows a need for more education.

World Oral Health Day 2023

Annual World Oral Health Day takes place on the 20 March 2023 and gives the opportunity to unite and help to reduce the burden of oral diseases.

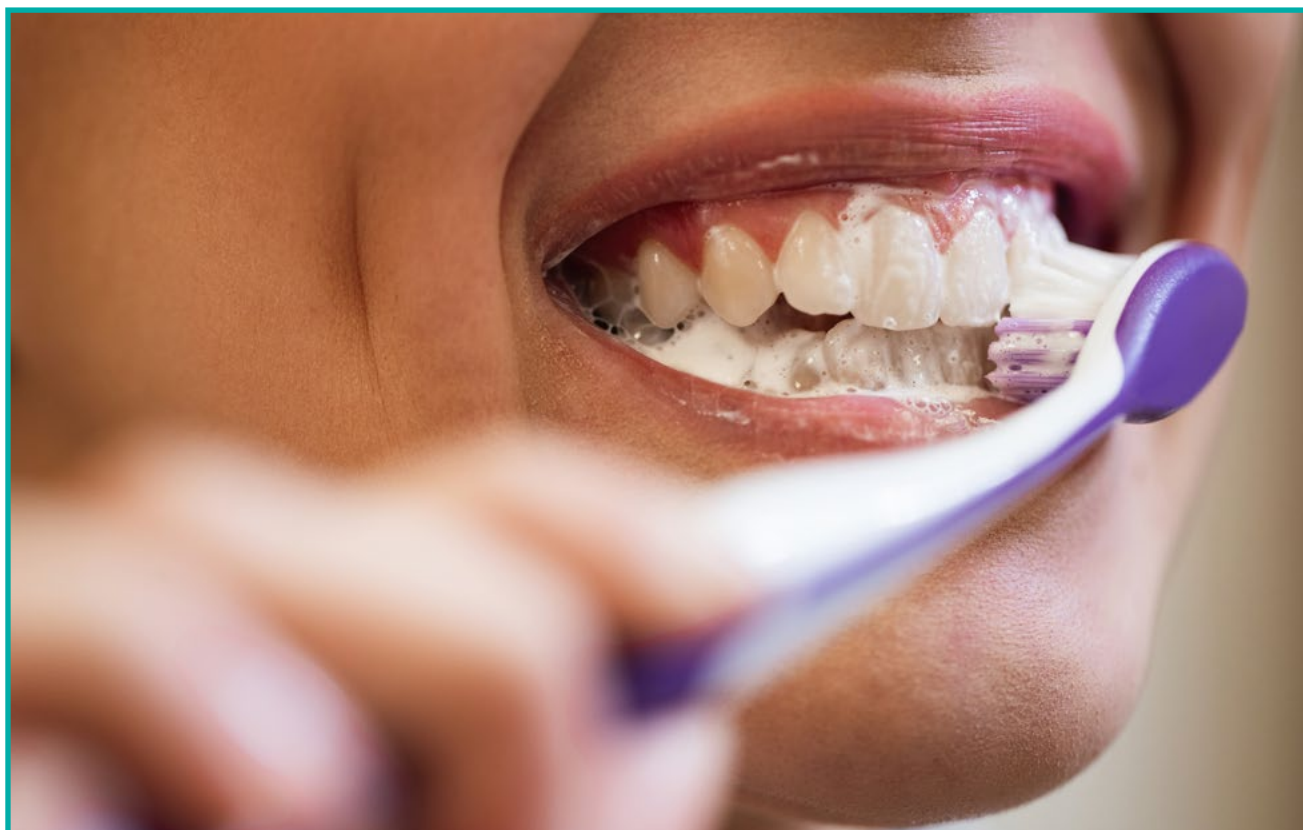
Oral diseases remain a major health concern for many countries.

The WHO (World Health Organization) Global Oral Health Status Report 2022 estimated that oral disease impact almost 3.5 billion people worldwide, with tooth decay being the most common health condition. Predictably, oral health diseases do not affect just individuals solely. Like a domino effect, the disease first impacts the person, then the health system, and consequently, the economy all around the world.

Oral diseases can lead to pain and discomfort, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, and are often linked to other serious health problems. It can cause more and more people to have to take time off work with pain or appointments to see a dentist to fix the problem and as a result a fall in productivity. To avoid this, the purpose of World Oral Health Day is to empower people with the knowledge, tools, resources, and confidence to acquire good oral health.

The 3-year campaign theme that started in 2021 is 'Be Proud of Your Mouth' and in 2023 it focuses on the importance of caring for your mouth at every stage of life. So, we have to make sure that whatever the age, caring for your teeth and gums and looking after your oral health should be as important as caring for your body, mind, and overall health.

So, what does caring for your mouth should look like at each stage of our lives?

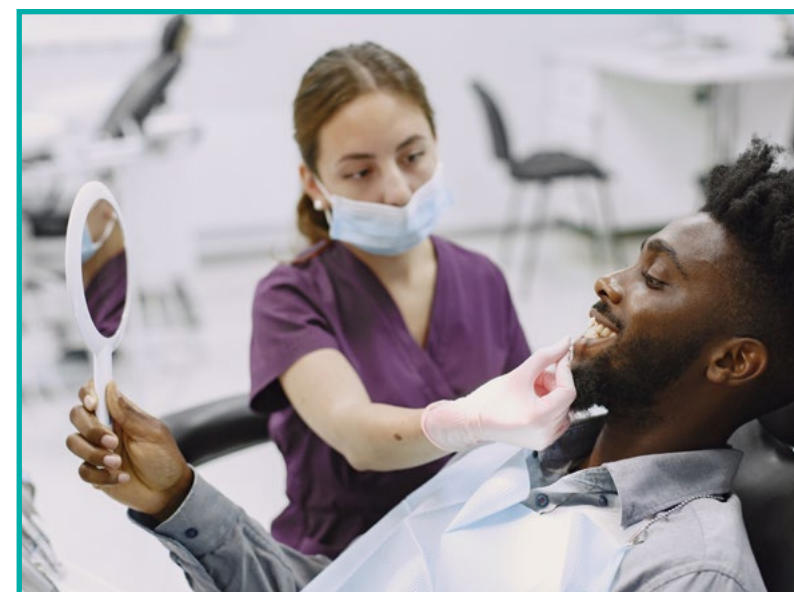


Oral health education and the importance of good oral hygiene should be taught from a young age so that they are most likely to become a habit for life. If you are a health professional, a teacher, or an educator in any setting, you can contribute towards a healthier nation by delivering oral health education to kids. Check out Oral Health Foundation's Dental Buddy programme (<https://www.dentalhealth.org/dentalbuddy>). It is a free and easy-to-use resource that includes all the oral health information and advice for kids from EYFS to Key Stage 2.



Some people think that preventive measures and a good oral hygiene routine at home can take a long time and a lot of effort. However, they really do not. All you have to do is follow these simple steps:

- Brush teeth for two minutes, last thing at night and one other time during the day, with fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth every day.
- Cut down on how much and how often you have sugary foods and drinks.
- Visit a dentist regularly, as often as they would recommend.



This is all that is needed to maintain good oral health throughout your whole life. These will help to keep oral diseases at bay, help you to stay on top of your oral health routine, and keep your mouth healthy as you continue through life.

As we age, we may find that our overall health begins to decline, this can include dental health. However, if you follow the steps outlined above, there is no reason why you should not keep your teeth for life and have fewer health issues to worry about when you get older. All it takes is a little bit of effort and the right education.



Stop. Think. Quit today - National No Smoking Day 2023

They say that stopping smoking improves your brain health, which is precisely the theme of this year's National No Smoking Day that took place on 8 March. Each year people are encouraged to break free from the chains of smoking and quit to fight their addiction and achieve better dental and overall health.

Dr Nigel Carter, OBE says: "We are calling for smokers to use No Smoking Day as a springboard to fully understand the effects smoking has on themselves and people around them, along with the huge benefits quitting can have". However, let's take a minute to explore how damaging smoking is not only for our brains and lungs but also for our mouths.

Most people are aware that smoking can cause lung cancer, but it is also the number one cause of mouth cancer. The reason for it is that tobacco is carcinogenic, it contains chemicals that can damage the cells and lead to cancer. Every year thousands of people die from mouth cancer caused by smoking.

Apart from leading to a potentially deadly disease, smoking can affect oral health in other ways. For example, it is not uncommon for a smoker to have stained teeth. Nicotine and tar in tobacco can stain the teeth yellow and even dark brown, in a relatively short period of time.



Smoking can also lead to gum disease. The risk of having gum disease is twice as high for a smoker than for a non-smoker. People who smoke are more likely to produce more bacterial plaque, which leads to gum disease. This happens because smoking lowers your immune system, making it harder to fight off disease and infection. This adverse effect on the immune system causes your gums to heal more

slowly. As a result, gum disease could continue to progress, leading to bone loss and the loss of teeth.

Apart from suffering from what is commonly called smoker's breath (a stale smell that is caused by smoking), smoking also dries out the mouth and this encourages the growth of bacteria, which causes bad breath. Bad breath is not the only issue that dry mouth (xerostomia) can cause. Saliva plays a very important role in protecting our teeth against dental decay. It helps to neutralise the plaque acids that are produced when we eat or drink anything. Saliva also has a role in starting the digestion of our food. It aids us to chew our food and helps to create a 'bolus' (a soft mass of chewed food) so that the food is easier to swallow.

Of course, there are ways to extra protect your teeth and gums from getting dental issues if you smoke. However, it will never be as good as giving up smoking completely.

- Use an antibacterial mouthwash to reduce the harmful bacteria caused by smoking.
- Chew sugar-free chewing gum for 20 minutes after smoking.
- Visit your dentist or hygienist regularly, to have your mouth checked and stains removed.
- Brush your teeth last thing at night and at least one other time during the day using fluoride toothpaste.
- A fluoride, whitening toothpaste may help to keep the staining down.

Therefore, if you do smoke, take the opportunity of a belated No Smoking Day to quit. You can ask your dentist or doctor for help with this. They can refer you to local stop-smoking services, which are free, friendly, and can massively boost your chances of quitting for good.

These services staffed by expert advisers provide a range of proven methods to help you quit.

They'll give you accurate information and advice,

as well as professional support, during the first few months you stop smoking.

They also make it easy and affordable for you to get stop-smoking treatments such as:

- Bupropion.
- Nicotine replacement therapy, such as patches and gum.

Pick your quitting date and remember to add it to your calendar.

The reasons for quitting:

- Your breath with smell better.

- You will save money.
- You will be less at risk of fatal diseases.
- You will reduce the risk for your family and friends suffering from passive smoking.
- You will get your sense of smell and taste back.
- The health of your mouth and body will improve, including your breathing.
- There will be less staining on your teeth.

With this extra help, you should be on the right path to quitting for good.



How about dentistry? - National Careers Week 2023

Biochemistry, business, economics, journalism, and the list of professions seems endless. There is a vast range of careers to choose from and pursue either gaining experience or qualifications to enable them to follow their dreams.

Whilst some individuals know what they want to do, others sometimes need a little guidance to put them on the right path that would suit their interests and subjects that they possibly excel in. For instance, those good with numbers might want to try accountancy, teaching mathematics, or engineering. Those who enjoy reading and writing may choose a career in creative writing, journalism, or psychology. Those who are caring and eager to help people will most likely enjoy becoming a doctor, a nurse, or maybe a dentist.

Following a career in medicine or dentistry is a long process of education and hands-on practical experience, which can take many years to complete. So, these types

of professions require dedication and hard work that will continue with their professional development throughout their whole career.

As challenging as dentistry truly is, it can also be very rewarding. By choosing dentistry, you would be helping people to care for their mouths, offering preventative advice, and treatment to alleviate pain, and making a positive change to the oral health of your community.

First and foremost, you will spend most of your career caring for people's oral health.

That involves helping to make, in some circumstances, significant improvements in their quality of life by restoring their teeth

and smiles. This will improve their self-esteem and make them more confident. In more severe cases, you could even improve their ability to eat and speak properly, which will have a major effect on their quality of life. Dental experts say that there can be nothing more rewarding than seeing a happy patient shooting them a new and improved smile on their way out of the surgery!



There is currently a lack of dental professionals in the UK, so they are extremely in demand. This includes dentists, hygienists, and dental nurses, and oral healthcare will always be necessary, also as people live longer demand for dentists and dental treatment will only increase. So, there is a strong likelihood that dental professionals will always be highly valued.

Furthermore, dentists have the potential to earn salaries that can provide a future with good financial stability. Eventually, as a young dentist, you may decide to open your own practice and become your

own boss. This would give you the desired level of power over your time, money, and future. A career in dentistry could provide you with not just financial and emotional rewards but also put you in control of your own life.

Dentistry is one of the oldest medical professions, dating back to 7000 B.C. Even though the principle of it hasn't changed, a lot of the ways of working, the materials used and the knowledge of oral diseases have come on in leaps and bounds.

Dentistry has been constantly evolving, it has gone through various regulatory and technological changes which make dentistry more and more exciting as these changes happen. As a dental professional, you will always learn and grow all the time. As you become more knowledgeable, you will be constantly improving your skills, which can only be good news for you and your patients.

National Careers Week took place on 6 -11 March, but the resources are available all year round for students, educators, and organisations. An insight into the world of employment, career guidance, and

professional help are available to anyone who is interested <https://nationalcareersweek.com/>. They will also be able to provide more information and experience about how to get into dentistry as a career path.

In the meantime, if you or anyone you know is interested in becoming a dental professional, have a look at this article <https://www.dentalhealth.org/blog/do-you-know-the-difference-between-different-dental-professionals> to get further insight into diverse dental professionals and the difference between them.

A healthy diet is an essential milestone to a healthy smile foundation.

Want to find out more about which foods and drinks are good and bad for you?

Simply click on the link below to get more information and stay on top of your diet and a healthy mouth.

www.dentalhealth.org/diet-and-my-teeth

Taskforce backs the benefits of teledentistry to improve global oral care outcomes



A Global Taskforce of academic experts has concluded that teledentistry has the ability to give millions more people around the world regular access to dental services.



Brought together by the Oral Health Foundation and Unilever, the group found that teledentistry has the potential to remove or reduce many of the major barriers associated with access to oral healthcare, specifically in developing and emerging countries.

The panel determined that teledentistry can be an effective method for education, dental referrals, early detection of disease, treatment planning and compliance, and treatment viability.

Teledentistry was deemed

especially useful where the access to dental professionals is limited or not evenly spread over a country or region. It was also seen as a cost-saving measure for the patient and the dental clinic.

According to Dr Nigel Carter

OBE, chief executive of the Oral Health Foundation, there is an urgent need to expand access to dental care, and he believes teledentistry has an important role to play.

Dr Carter says: “There is a critical need to bridge the gap between the underserved population and dental care professionals.

“Despite the links between oral health and general health being widely recognised, oral diseases remain far too common. A preventive approach to oral health remains the best option, and dental professionals remain the best people to deliver specific educational messages.

“Frustratingly, access to dental services around the world remains unbalanced. Many people across rural and remote areas, from low socio-economic groups and those with physical and mental disabilities, have

reduced opportunities to access dental care.

“Teledentistry may be in its infancy but clearly has incredible potential to increase dental access for hard-to-reach groups. Teledentistry can maximise the resources of a limited workforce and provide important educational and diagnostic services at a lower cost.”

Currently, around 2.4 billion people across the world do not have the means to access dental care.

While investigating the main barriers to dental access, a low number of qualified dentists in developing nations was listed as a substantial problem. In many countries, most dentists reside in larger cities, leaving rural and geographically-isolated patients without care.

A lack of dental access was

also found to impact the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups while financial barriers and fear of the dentist also came high in the list of difficulties for seeing dental professionals.

The analysis revealed significant opportunities for evidence-based oral health advice that can be delivered by implementing specific teledentistry models.

The benefits of teledentistry as a solution to overcome barriers to oral healthcare can be summarised by:

Better access to a specialised workforce

Preventive messages, early intervention procedures, recording of oral health status, and selection of patients in terms of urgency for in-person treatment can be performed by trained personnel in health

centres or even at home in remote areas.

Helps to address oral health inequalities

Several teledentistry models have been shown to impact the oral health of specific population groups that find it difficult to access existing dental centres or practices. Teledentistry will be part of future dentistry, especially in countries where inequalities are a big problem.

Helps to reduce financial constraints

Recent teledentistry models have shown that this form of provision can reduce not only travel costs but often limit the number of appointments with a dental practice further reducing the costs.

To tackle many of the barriers associated with dental access,

Pepsodent has launched a teledentistry initiative across Indonesia and Vietnam.

The project aims to reduce oral diseases amongst the most vulnerable people by making dental access more inclusive, readily available, and financially affordable.

Kartik Chandrasekhar, category head for oral care at Unilever, says: "At Pepsodent, our mission is simple – to improve lives by making quality oral healthcare accessible to everyone. We know that access to oral healthcare can be a challenge for many, which is why we're excited about our teledentistry initiative. Through this program, we've already reached over 100 million consumers in Indonesia and Vietnam, breaking down barriers to access and preventing oral disease.

"Teledentistry has the potential to revolutionise the way people receive oral healthcare. With

the support of the Oral Health Foundation and Unilever, we're committed to scaling this initiative and bringing affordable oral care to underserved populations all over the world. That's why we're passionate about partnering with dental associations around the globe to make this a reality."

The taskforce included representatives from nine countries, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Tunisia, Ghana, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

The group investigated the major global barriers to accessing dental care and reviewed the most recent publications on teledentistry projects. The panel then suggested possible outcomes as well as practical implications of delivering teledentistry services around the world.

The full opinion paper can be found at www.dentalhealth.org.

Every penny goes towards helping people achieve a healthy smile.

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. Every penny counts. Please donate today.

www.dentalhealth.org/donate

You are what you eat... and drink - Nutrition and Hydration Week 13-19 March 2023

What we put into our bodies can affect not only our overall health but our teeth as well. That is why, as part of Nutrition and Hydration Week, the Oral Health Foundation is looking at some of the changes that we can make to keep our minds, bodies, and mouth healthy.

Around 3 million people are at risk of malnutrition in the UK (lack of proper nutrition, caused by not having enough to eat, not eating enough of the right things). That's why it is so important that we investigate what we are putting on our plates and in our glasses.

There are so many activities and events that you can take part in that can help you to learn about nutrition and hydration. One of the activities suggested is Fruity Friday, where you can make sure you eat at least one piece of fruit. If you want to be even better, make sure it is a fruit that is less harmful to your teeth.

Eating lots of acidic fruits can damage your teeth if you eat them too frequently or in-between meals. Why not have a banana?

Bananas are one of the UK's most popular fruit and with incredibly good reason. Firstly, they are delicious but also very nutritious and contain lots of vitamins and minerals. They contain fibre, potassium, vitamin C, and



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www.dentalhealth.org



vitamin B6. These nutrients may have several health benefits, such as for digestive and heart health which can all be linked to your mouth's health. Vitamin C helps with helping to protect gum cells and keep them healthy, maintaining healthy skin, blood vessels, bones, and cartilage, and can help with wound healing.

Bananas also have a very low acidity level so unlike a citrus fruit, there is less risk of enamel erosion caused by the acid in the fruit.

Hydration is equally important. The best drinks for hydration are water and milk. Water is excellent for rehydration and will help keep your mouth moist. Keeping hydrated is key to helping our brain health and being able to concentrate properly during the day.

Milk is also highly nutritious, and it has a neutral pH level, which means that it is not acidic. Calcium and phosphorus help to strengthen tooth enamel and the bone around the teeth, while vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium and phosphorus better. This means that milk has it all. Healthy and nutritious for both your body and mouth alike.

During this week, you could also try to take some time out and have afternoon tea with friends and family. It would be a great time to talk about nutrition and hydration and share tips with your loved ones. Since this campaign began in 2012, there has been a Global Afternoon Tea Wednesday, this year it falls on 15 March.

Tea, like coffee, can stain your mouth if drunk in substantial amounts, however normal consumption and a cup with friends can be beneficial both mentally and physically. Tea leaf contains fluoride which is beneficial for your teeth's enamel and can help prevent tooth decay but remember to not add sugar, as this will negate the benefits of the fluoride. Tooth decay, also known as dental decay or caries, is a major health concern worldwide and is still a big problem in the UK.

Nutrition and hydration are incredibly important, from start to end, we only have one body and one set of permanent teeth. This means it is important to look after them both and give them a healthy well-balanced diet and enough fluid to function properly. If you would like to have more help with your nutrition or dental health then the NHS has some fantastic resources at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/> or you can visit our website <https://www.dentalhealth.org/> to learn more about dental health.



Looking for the perfect little gift?

We all know how hard it can be to try and find the perfect gift.

It could be for a birthday, a gift for a baby shower, or another special event. Will the children already have it? Will they like it? Will it drive this parent up the wall with the amount of noise it makes?

If you are looking for that perfect little gift for those tiny tots, you could think about getting them a dental storybook. It is a perfect gift, it is something that will be useful for both the parent and child, it can help alleviate fears of the dentist and it will have a story with a good dental health message but be fun as well. Also, it will certainly be a popular and original present!

One of our favourites is “First Time at the Dentist”, a lovely, simple storybook for three to six-year-olds.

You can use these types of books as a starting point to talk to your child about visiting the dentist and help them understand and prepare for this and even share any worries they may have. Often children will pick up if a parent is nervous, so it is important that you try not to show that you are anxious, this will help to prevent your fear from being passed on to your child.

According to Anxiety UK, Surveys carried out on Dental Phobia reveal that up to 53% of the UK population are scared of visiting their dentist. More worryingly, 17% of the population have such a bad fear of getting any dentistry done that they refuse to visit or get essential dental work done.

There are lots of great books to help our children to feel confident and help them to take care of their teeth. Why not choose a book that involves their favourite character? Peppa Pig is popular in many households, so “Peppa Pig Dentist Trip” (for three - to six-year-olds) will be a huge hit.

This particular book can also be great for a first-time dental visit as the story follows Peppa and George preparing to visit the dentist. In the story, Peppa and George are going to the dentist today. It’s George’s first visit, so he’s a little nervous - but Peppa shows him that a trip to the dentist can be lots of fun!

Roughly three school days on average are missed yearly due to children experiencing dental pain. This is incredibly distressing to think about, we all want what is best for our children.



For slightly older children, (5-9 years old), you may want to start discussing nutrition and hydration with them. A great book to start to introduce this is “What to Eat and Drink”. This book can help them to start to learn about caring for their teeth and having a good, healthy diet which can start to instil good habits that will last for life.

It can be very hard even as an adult to learn how to care for your teeth and what to eat. For example, when you are reading the ingredient labels on food, remember that ‘no added sugar’ does not mean that the product is sugar-free. It simply means that no extra sugar has been added, some of these products can still be very high in natural sugars so can cause dental decay. These products may contain sugars,

but they may not be listed as ‘sugar’. Many sugars are listed as other ingredients, that you may not instantly recognise as sugar. These include:

- Sucrose.
- Lactose.
- Dextrose.
- Maltose.
- Fructose.
- Glucose.
- Honey.



Sugars may also be listed as ‘carbohydrates’. Ask your dental team if you are not sure.

Having healthy, decay-free baby teeth is important as this can impact permanent teeth. If the baby teeth have to be removed, due to dental decay, the adult teeth may come through in the wrong position, which could mean that they will need to have orthodontic (braces) teeth when they get older. If you are struggling to explain to your child the process of ‘baby’ teeth becoming wobbly and coming out and adult teeth growing in their place, there are several books available on the online shop such as “Wibbly Wobbly Tooth” for six to eight years old.

It is important that you look after your and your child’s adult teeth, these teeth need to last for the rest of your life. Teeth are at risk of tooth decay as soon as they begin to erupt, so you need to look





after them with a good oral health regime and a healthy diet.

The main cause of tooth decay is the sugar that is in the food and drinks you have every day and how often you have them. When you eat or drink anything that contains sugar, it reacts with the plaque (the creamy, white sticky film that forms on your teeth) in your mouth and produces plaque acids. These plaque acids attack the enamel on your teeth and if left or this happens too often, it can lead to dental decay. It takes our saliva 1 hour to neutralise these plaque acids and lower the pH level in your mouth. This is why it is important not to snack on sugary sweets, biscuits, cake, etc., in-between meals, this will help to reduce these acid attacks. Here are some safe snacks that you could try instead:

- Rice cakes.
- Breadsticks.
- Vegetable sticks and hummus.
- Toast or crumpets.
- Cheese.
- Nuts and seeds.

A good tip to help the saliva to neutralise this plaque acid after eating or drinking and speed up the process is to either rinse with a fluoride rinse (age appropriate), chew sugar-free gum for 20 minutes, or have a glass of water. This will help to reduce the risk of decay and enamel erosion.

Full details of all the books mentioned, and more online at www.dentalhealth.org.

“We’ve taken a look at what you get up to with your used toothbrushes and there really are some incredibly inventive, unusual and even bizarre uses which it can be put to.

Dr Nigel Carter, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation

Global Recycling Day 18 March

We should all be aware by now that plastic is not good for the environment.

This is because many of the plastics that we use in our daily life are not recyclable. A huge quantity of this non-recycled plastic end up in landfill and contribute to the ongoing pollution of our planet.

This Word of Mouth magazine article is going to be looking at how to recycle some of the most common dental products that we use day-to-day and how we can all get involved in Global Recycling Day 2023.

Historically, it has been very difficult to recycle many dental products, however, the tide is turning and manufacturers are now looking at eco-friendly alternatives, such as bamboo toothbrushes. One of the best features of a bamboo toothbrush is that it can be disposed of in your compost bin and will be degraded within a couple of years.

However, these toothbrushes may not be the best for everyone. You may, for example, have been recommended to use an electric toothbrush by your dentist or hygienist, to help



keep on top of your dental health, especially if you have been diagnosed with gum disease. These electrical toothbrushes and heads are much harder to recycle so it is worth checking out any local options you may have, such as Council Refuse and Recycling sites. Some shops offer to recycle your old toothbrush when you buy a new one, whether it is a manual or electric toothbrush.

Another way to prevent your old toothbrush from ending up in a landfill is to use it for something else, for example, to clean hard-to-reach places around the house. These could include:

- Computer keyboards.
- Bathroom or kitchen tiles.
- Cleaning jewellery.
- Cleaning the alloys on a car.
- Getting the mud off a football or rugby boots.
- You could break the head off a bamboo toothbrush and use it as a plant marker, in the garden.

Whilst the manufacturers are still working on a recyclable plastic toothpaste tube, it is possible to get your toothpaste in reusable or recyclable plastic tubs. However, check that this product contains fluoride, and it is at the recommended level of 1350-1500 ppm fluoride for children over 3 years old and adults. You can also ditch your plastic-coated dental floss, in favour of floss that has a beeswax coating, which is a by-product of the honey industry. This allows the floss to slide between your teeth easily. Using by-products from other industries can help to reduce waste.

Drinking tap water regularly can help to keep your mouth moist and look after your dental health. It is a good way to keep hydrated without exposing teeth to sugary or fizzy drinks. Even more so if the tap water in your area, contains fluoride. Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in water (both bottled and added to some tap water) which can reduce the risk of tooth decay. It does this by making your tooth enamel, the hard coating around your teeth, stronger and more resistant to offer protection against acid attacks.

Buying bottled water in plastic is not great for the environment, especially if it cannot be recycled. Instead, why not buy yourself a reusable water bottle made of sustainable material or a water bottle made from recycled plastic that can be recycled once again after you have used it? By developing this good habit of taking water with you in your own water bottle, your mouth, body, and environment will be healthier for it.

However, this Global Recycling Day, remember even the smallest change could make a big difference to the world and to your dental health. If you would like to find out more information then please go to [A-Z oral health information | Oral Health Foundation \(dentalhealth.org\)](#) to learn more about how to look after your teeth.



Does dental access still remain a major issue in the UK?

Access to good dental care can be very beneficial for your physical health and a great smile can improve your mental health too. You really cannot put value on a healthy mouth and an attractive smile.

Unfortunately, in the past few years, NHS dentistry in the UK has come under increasing stress leading to many people not being able to access the NHS dental care that they need, leaving many people with dental pain unable to get an appointment.

Dr Nigel Carter, CEO of the Oral Health Foundation said: “Oral health varies around the UK – it is a postcode lottery. This isn’t going to go away overnight as there are just not enough NHS dentists to cover all the areas of the country.

“Whether that dentistry is being delivered on the NHS or the private sector, it is not possible without an adequate workforce, therefore more dentists, hygienists, therapists, and dental nurses need to be trained, as soon as possible.

“You really can’t achieve good health and well-being without good oral health. That’s why we are calling for a levelling up agenda so that everybody can achieve the standards of oral health that they deserve.”

This is not an issue that can or will be resolved overnight. So, in the meantime, we need to ensure that we are looking after our dental health as best as we can.

The key to this is prevention, the Oral Health Foundation has 3 key messages:

- Brush your teeth for two minutes, last thing at night and at least one other time during the day, using fluoride toothpaste.





- Cut down on the number of sugary foods and drinks you have and how often you have them.
- Visit your dentist regularly, as often as they would recommend.

Hidden sugar is often in food that we wouldn't even imagine it is in, such as pasta sauces or baked beans.

These sugary products can lead to tooth decay also known as dental caries. Every time you eat or drink anything, sugar in the food or drink reacts with the bacteria in the plaque in your mouth (plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that forms on the teeth). This produces plaque acids which can cause the enamel to weaken, and eventually, this will cause a hole in the tooth. It takes the saliva an hour to neutralise these harmful acids and return our mouths to a neutral pH level and re-mineralise the softened enamel.

Eating 3 regular meals and not snacking constantly throughout the day will help keep your teeth in better condition.

You should also concentrate on your toothbrushing technic. Effective toothbrushing removes plaque and food particles from all the surfaces of your teeth. This will help to protect your teeth against dental decay and your gums against gum disease. You should change your toothbrush every 3 months or as soon as it begins to lose its original shape. You should also change your toothbrush after you have had a sore throat or other bacterial infection too, to prevent the spreading of the bacteria.

You should use toothpaste that contains fluoride. Children 0-3 years old should use a smear of fluoride toothpaste that contains 1000 ppm (parts per million) of fluoride. If you are aged 3 and over, use a pea-sized smear of toothpaste that contains 1350-1500 ppm (parts per million) fluoride.

Last but certainly not least, visiting a dentist regularly is still important, so how do I find one? The NHS keeps a database of dentists around the country, this can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>. If you type in your postcode, you will

be able to see local dentists in your area, that are taking on new patients, and you will then be able to contact them to make an appointment.

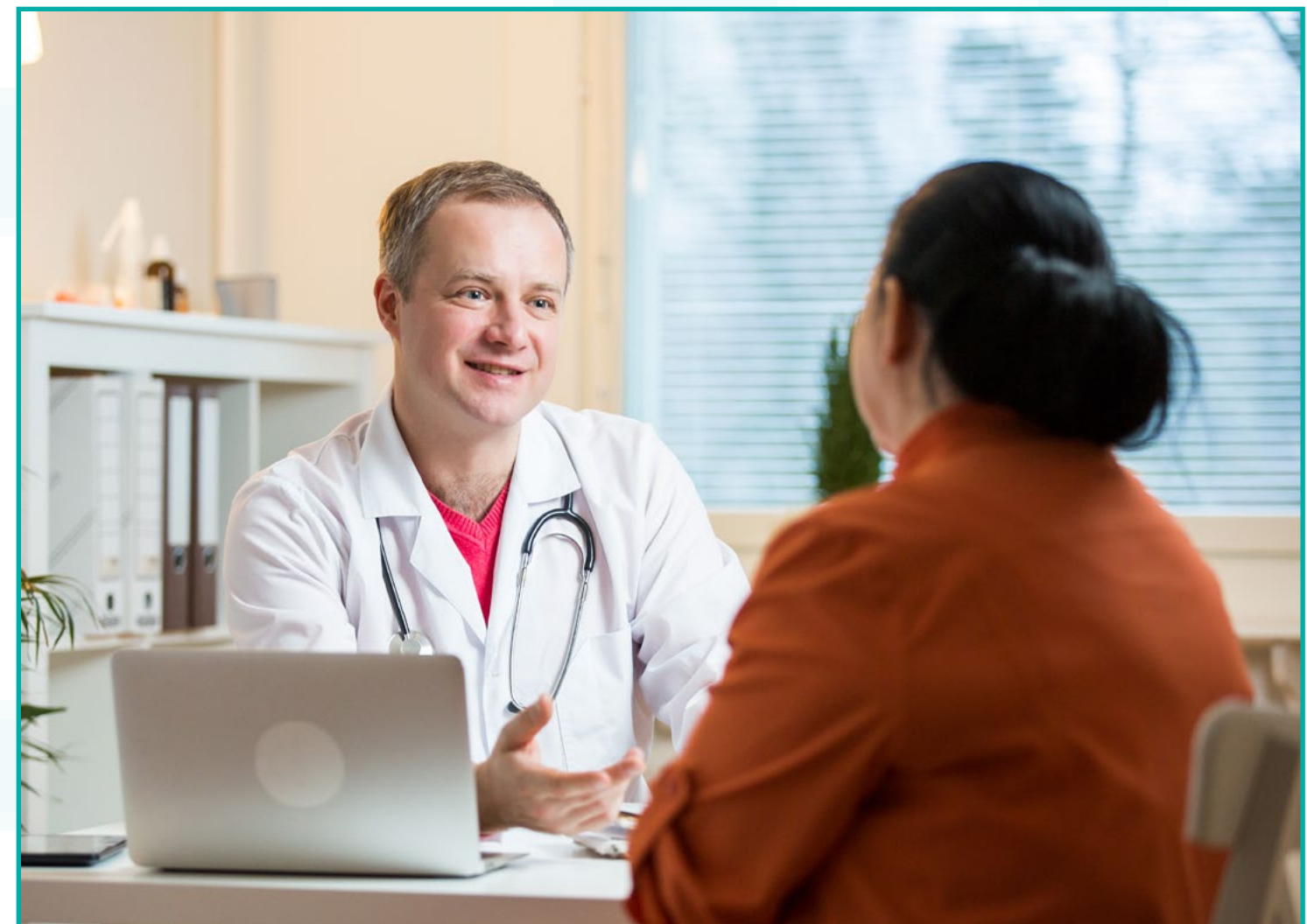
There are a few reasons that an NHS dentist may remove you from their list of regular patients. (Please note that this removal is from their practice list, there is no official registration with an NHS dentist, in England and Wales).

The reasons for removing you from their list include:

- Missing appointments.
- Late cancellation of appointments (usually less than 24 hours).

- Irregular attendance (usually if you have not attended a check-up within 18-24 months).
- Rudeness to staff.
- Breakdown of dentist/patient relationship.

In most cases, good communication can help to prevent the majority of these issues. Most dentists prefer a stable base of their regular patients. This helps to monitor their patient's dental health regularly and helps to spot problems when they are minor which reduces the need for more extensive work later on.





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



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