Word of Mouth

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MEET THE DENTAL HELPLINE

British Dental Health Foundation

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Dr Nigel Carter
OBE
Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation

The Foundation would firstly like to belatedly say Happy New Year and wish you all the very best for the year ahead. As we step into 2013, the Foundation continues to improve oral health in the UK by providing free and impartial dental advice, by running educational campaigns and by informing and influencing government policy on issues such as mouth cancer awareness and fluoridation.

The coming year provides the Foundation with an opportunity to capitalise on an increased awareness of oral health matters, such as further national coverage of gum disease links with general health, along with high profile cases of mouth cancer. It will also important to continue to lobby for increased funding for preventive care, and to achieve a higher awareness of the basics of education in good oral health habits at an early age as well as emphasising the benefits of good diet for both dental and general health.

With the potential harm to teeth of a culture - which happily endorses such sticky, sugary products as fruit smoothies as a healthy drink it will be vital to keep up our campaign of information and, strong consumer advice to educate the public on the causes and dangers of dental decay and dental erosion.

Our Dental Helpline expert staff take more than 100 calls a day, from people all across the country, giving free and impartial oral health advice. Inside this edition you’ll be able to read more about the work of our Dental Helpline, and find out just how the team there have helped to raise awareness and improve oral health for over 15 years.

I hope you enjoy the January edition of our digital magazine: Word of Mouth and once again, best wishes for 2013!
CHARITY BACKS CHANGE4LIFE CAMPAIGN

Foundation has welcomed the Government’s new campaign to identify ‘hidden nasties’ in everyday foods.

Launched by Public Health Minister Anna Soubry, the ‘Change4Life’ campaign will feature graphic new advertising revealing the shocking levels of hidden sugars and fats in foods and drinks, and by doing so supporting one of the Foundation’s key messages - Cut down on how often you have sugary foods and drinks. The advertising campaign aired for the first time on January 7 and marked the beginning of a New Year healthy eating drive. A number of leading brand names have signed up to the campaign, including Asda, Cravendale, Quorn and Uncle Ben’s.

The campaign comes as new survey data revealed the scale of the nation’s lack of knowledge about what they consume. Half of people surveyed did not know there are 11 sugar lumps in cola, and a similar number of people didn’t know a large takeaway pepperoni pizza contains twice the amount of recommended daily saturated fats, equivalent to a wine glass full. While the campaign is targeting the continued rise in obesity, Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter OBE, says it will go much further than improving waistlines.

Dr Carter says: “It has been well-documented in the past that these ‘hidden nasties’ have a leading role to play in The introduction of this campaign will hopefully be another step in the right direction for both general and oral health.”

“It is encouraging to see more Government action supporting one of the Foundation’s key messages. Consuming too many acidic foods, as well as eating sugary foods and drinks too often can potentially increase the risk of dental erosion and tooth decay. The increase in consumption of sugary drinks is one of the key reasons for tooth decay, particularly in children.

“Any campaign that highlights how often our teeth are exposed to sugary foods and drinks is to be welcomed. As a nation we have turned from three square meals a day to seven to ten snack attacks including constantly sipping sugary drinks; and this may be one reason why improvements in dental health have been slowing down.

“The cost of poor diet has a profound effect on our health. In the UK, over 60 per cent of adults are overweight or obese. This is contributing to a growing social and economic burden of chronic disease including cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes, both of which have also been linked to poor oral health.”
**OESTROGEN LINKED TO GUM DISEASE**

New pioneering research has revealed for the first time that women with higher hormone levels have a greater chance of developing gum disease during pregnancy.

The authors of the study found that the levels of the hormone oestrogen found in pregnant women strongly determine their risk of developing gum disease. In all three trimesters, those women with higher levels of oestrogen and dental plaque had more pregnancy-related gum disease than those with lower levels.

Although pregnancy can cause gums to bleed more easily, the role of the most common hormone found in women in that process has not previously been discussed. Dental Advisor at the British Dental Health Foundation, Karen Coates, described the research as a positive step towards improving the oral health of pregnant women.

Karen said: “This research could make a real difference to the oral health of pregnant women. It takes on increased significance, given that only recently we have also seen new research linking preterm births and severe gum disease.

“High levels of oestrogen are commonly seen in healthy pregnancies, and this only reinforces the Foundation’s message that pregnant women really have to look after their oral health throughout those nine months.

“The good news is that taking steps to prevent gum disease from developing are relatively simple. It’s never too late to start looking after your oral health, and becoming pregnant should act as a catalyst to do so for those who may have previously overlooked it.

Regular cleaning, regular dental visits and a willingness to keep on top of a good routine will certainly help. With appointments for pregnant women free on the NHS until your child’s first birthday, there is no reason for gum disease or any other oral health problem to develop.”

The study, carried out at the University of Helsinki, also found that oestrogen levels of pregnant women significantly increased during their second and third trimesters and returned to pregnancy levels after delivery. Those suffering with higher levels of plaque experienced more bleeding gums compared to those with less plaque.

Editor’s Notes

1. Mervi Gürsoy, Ulvi Kahrman Gürsoy, Timo Sorsa, Riitta Pajukanta, and Eija Könönen, High Salivary Estrogen and Risk of Developing Pregnancy Gingivitis, Journal of Periodontology 0 0:0, 1-10
Brush you teeth
Brush teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride can substantially benefit dental health by strengthening the tooth enamel, making it more resistant to acid attacks that can cause tooth decay. Brushing with a powered toothbrush can also help, and in trials they have been proven to be more effective at removing plaque than a manual toothbrush.

Cut down unhealthy food
Cut down on the frequency of sugary snacks and drinks. Every time you eat or drink anything sugary your teeth are under acid attack for about an hour. It is best to eat sugary foods at mealtimes to reduce these attacks and help prevent decay.

Lots of people make New Year Resolutions to eat healthier with more fresh fruit and fruit juice after their seasonal binge, but it’s important to be aware of the risks of dental erosion from acidic fruit. When you eat fruit or drink fruit juice the enamel on your teeth is softened by the acid. Wait at least an hour before brushing your teeth – or brush before breakfast if you’re dashing out to work afterwards.

Visit your dentist
Visit your dentist at as often as they recommend for a check-up. During a dental check up your dentist will examine the soft tissues in your mouth, to identify conditions such as oral cancer, as well as your teeth and gums. A thorough examination could alert your dentist to other health conditions such as anemia and even symptoms of stress.

THREE FOR 2013

According to new research, 26.5 million people – over half of adults in the UK – will have made a New Year’s Resolution in 2013, with many putting improved health as their number one goal¹. But very few will make oral health their priority despite its importance to all-round good health and success.

A confident smile is an important social asset and one that we at the British Dental Health Foundation think is easy to achieve. Our research shows that only half of us in the UK are happy with our teeth, with tooth loss and stained or yellow teeth being the top concerns. That’s why it is surprising that so few people make improved oral health a New Year Resolution.

The smile is also important to many other facets of life. Having the confidence to smile shapes our image and is hugely important to relationships. When it comes to attraction, surveys have shown that a smile is even more important than the face, eyes, dress sense, body shape, hair and height.

With that in mind, we have come up with three simple New Year’s Resolutions that you can keep to, which will not only improve your oral health, but your general health and confidence too.

A basic New Year Resolution of adopting a great oral health routine in 2013 can help prevent many of these issues – from bad breath to serious heart disease.

Happy New Year, and stay healthy.
Written by David Arnold
Sources:
¹ Thinkmoney (2013). “14.5m Brits set to make a New Year’s Resolution to lose weight”, online at http://www.thinkmoney.co.uk/about-thinkmoney/new-years-resolutions.pdf, [accessed on 10.01.2013].

SO THERE YOU GO!

Three simple tips that will improve and maintain your oral health for the year ahead.

Keeping a good oral health routine is not just important from a social point of view. There is an increasing body of clinical evidence to support the systemic links between poor oral health and some of the biggest causes of serious poor health and death in the UK. Gum disease may contribute to the furring of the arteries which can cause heart disease while those people with gum disease are also nearly twice as likely to develop diabetes. Even pregnant women who have gum disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is premature and with a low birth weight.

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HEALTHY BODY: FROM A
DENTAL CARE PROFESSIONAL’S
PERSPECTIVE

Have you ever heard the expression, “Your mouth is a mirror of your insides”? For some people there is strong evidence to suggest that the above statement may be true and that visible problems in the oral cavity could possibly indicate a more general medical concern.

I truly believe this and preach this message daily to my patients whilst emphasising the importance of a regular dental check up, good oral hygiene and education. You can tell a lot by looking inside someone’s mouth; whether they smoke or not, have a high sugar diet, are stressed and nervous, or on certain types of medication, dehydrated and even their age! Everyone’s mouth and history is different.

I believe it is important for a Dental Care Professional to look for more than the obvious. I feel a bit like a secondary filter. After all, it is our duty of care.

The most obvious things we look for are, double-checking soft tissues for any abnormalities that may need to be recorded, taking photographs or having things reviewed again by the dentist. It’s better to be safe than sorry, right?

What else?
As some of you may already know, on-going research shows that there are strong links between periodontal (gum) disease and systemic disorders such as diabetes. Other research suggests a link between the health of one’s mouth to other conditions including cardiovascular disease.

Diabetes is more common these days
The probable factors, which may link periodontal disease to diabetes, are that diabetics are known to have a compromised immune system, which could increase the risk due to vulnerability. This also affects the healing process of the gums. Chemicals may also be produced by over-weight diabetics due to excess lipids that are known to be linked to inflammation of the gums. New research has also shown that one is more likely to develop diabetes if you already have gum disease.

Cardiovascular Disease.
“Love your heart. Love your teeth!”
The bacteria in the mouth aiding gum disease are known to produce protein which may cause platelets in the blood to clot together in blood vessels of the heart reducing normal blood flow restricting necessary amounts of oxygen. This could result in a heart attack. It is believed that a patient with gum disease may be twice as likely to develop coronary artery disease.

Any patient with gum disease also has a high risk of losing teeth prematurely. This can affect confidence, speaking and eating. One’s smile and mouth are personal, signatory and important for functional uses as well as your well-being.

As with most diseases, prevention is cheaper than a cure. Maintaining good oral hygiene can generally prevent gum disease and reduce tooth decay.

In the chair
From my own experience, I have noticed when someone feels under the weather that it is common for him or her to have poor oral hygiene, have ulcers, cold sores and feel sick. The last thing you want to do is clean your teeth. This is where I encourage my patients to change their way of thinking.

Another example is when patients’ gums bleed, naturally they say they want to stop brushing but in fact I tell them of the need to increase their oral hygiene regime in order to make things better. This in itself is a challenge, but working over 4 years with only one practice means I’ve learned to know the patients well and gained their trust and support. After following the “backward” advice, the patients found me to be correct; things did get better for them. They stated their teeth felt cleaner, gums healthier, fresher breath and overall happier in their appearance, feeling good!

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Even advanced erosion in one’s mouth could be a sign of gastric problems. This is common and can be rectified by correct oral diagnosis and simply referring the patient back to their doctor for medication.

Take a look inside your own mouth! What do you see? There’s no harm in an extra clean mouth right? But there could be with having a dirty one…?

Remember to make sure you see the dentist and hygienist on a regular basis for maintenance as well as brushing your teeth and gums twice a day for two minutes and ensuring to clean interdentally with floss or other interdental aids, as a healthy mouth may mean a healthy body!
It has been 42 years since the British Dental Health Foundation was formed, and in that time it has grown significantly.

In 1970 the concept of preventive dentistry and the benefits it presented was a relatively new idea, and was only practised by a small number of dental professionals. The founding fathers of the Foundation wished to see dentistry move into modern times. They believed that modern dentistry had much to offer, and was no longer something for people to fear. They intended to use the Foundation to spread positive oral health messages among the public, including informing people that their teeth could be ‘for life’.

One of the main developments within the Foundation has been the addition of the National Dental Helpline in the late 1990s.

The Helpline is dedicated to providing free, impartial and confidential information and advice on all oral health topics and receives enquiries via phone, email and post.

During their working week the Helpline team not only answer the public’s queries, but also use their skills to assist other teams within the Foundation. The team support the marketing department in the creation of the ‘Tell me about’ leaflets, which numerous dental practices around the UK use to inform patients of particular treatments or conditions. This process requires a sound knowledge of the latest changes in the oral-health profession, an in-depth understanding of various treatments and an ability to communicate that information in an easy-to-understand format. The Helpline team also act in a public facing role for the Foundation, attending schools to give oral health talks or hosting stands at health and wellbeing fairs.
You can now talk to them via email by visiting www.dentalhelpline.org or via Twitter by following @Dental_Advice.

The Helpline is available between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday on 0845 063 1188. You can now talk to them via email by visiting www.dentalhelpline.org or via Twitter by following @Dental_Advice.

MEET THE DENTAL HELPLINE

Karen Coates, another member of the Helpline team, has also pursued new challenges since joining the Foundation. After working at various dental practices in Warwickshire, Karen took a position as Territory Manager for Sensodyne and CTS Dental Supplies. After joining the Foundation in November 2005, Karen has trained as a spokesperson for the Foundation and gives regular interviews to the media.

Louise Chidlow joined the Foundation in 2005 as a Helpline Advisor, having worked as a dental nurse for almost 10 years both in NHS and private practices. It had always been an ambition of Louise’s to work in a profession that involved both in NHS and private practices. It had always been an ambition of Louise’s to work in a profession that involved both working with the public and required medical knowledge.

Louise said: “I wasn’t actually looking for a job when I joined the Foundation. I saw the advert and decided to apply, as it looked interesting. In the end, I decided it was a great opportunity to work for a recognised organisation and to help a wider audience than just the patients coming into the practice I worked in. Plus, it was a chance to learn new skills and do something a bit different.”

Karen said: “It is a good career progression for those who want a new challenge, but want to continue to use their dental knowledge. The Helpline team are communicators and educators of good oral health-care; essentially, they are still helping patients on a day to day basis.”

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In 2006, Yvonne Lee joined the Foundation after 24 and a half years in dentistry, working as a dental nurse, head receptionist and a practice manager. Looking for new challenges but not wanting to leave the industry, the Helpline position was ideal.

Yvonne points out that the time spent working in dental practices have helped the team to communicate effectively with the public.

She said: “We get callers from all walks of life, and we never know what we’ll be asked next; but it is satisfying being able to offer informed advice and reassure the public. The Helpline offers the opportunity for us to do just that.”

Another advantage of working for the Helpline is that the team often get an opportunity to attend tradeshows. Karen highlights that “this is something none of them had the chance to do before as dental nurses, and that it is a great way to speak to dentists and hygienists.”

“The profession isn’t always sure what we do at the Foundation. It’s great to speak to them and show how we can help them. Dentists often don’t have time to go through a procedure in detail with their patient, but at the Helpline we can discuss any oral health topic for as long as the caller requires. We are there immediately for the public, but it is also a service which can work in conjunction with dental practices – somewhere they can send their patients to for more information or independent advice.”

Another key development in the Foundation’s work was the introduction of two annual campaigns, National Smile Month and Mouth Cancer Action Month. National Smile Month runs from mid-May to mid-June, and promotes good oral health to the public. Mouth Cancer Action Month is held annually in November and encourages the health profession to educate and inform the public of the risk of the disease and the early warning signs to look out. The campaign uses the tagline ‘If in doubt, get checked out’. Dental nurses are in a prime position to promote both of these campaigns. As the essential link between a dentist and a patient, dental nurses often have more time to communicate such messages to a patient, or organise an event at a practice to raise awareness.

A hot issue for the Helpline currently, is Continuing Professional Development (CPD). CPD was introduced in August 2008, and requires dental nurses to complete 150 hours of dental development in five years. 50 hours of this has to be verified, covering core subjects such as Disinfection and Decontamination, Medical Emergencies and Radiography and Radiation Protection, and has to be certified by a third party and meet all of the General Dental Council’s educational criteria.

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There is a concern that non-surgery based nurses, though those are few and far between, will struggle to cover their certified hours and core subjects. Luckily, the Foundation encourages the Helpline team to participate in courses and seminars as part of their verifiable hours, to ensure there are the best advisors possible when answering calls.

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An oral health product accreditation scheme has been another development for the Foundation, and another side of the Foundation the Helpline team is involved in. An independent panel of experts evaluates oral health products on behalf of the Foundation, to ensure the items meet marketing claims made about them in advertising and on packaging. Successful products carry the Foundation’s approved symbol, providing customers with confidence in their high-street purchases. Currently over 150 products are approved for UK and overseas markets. The Helpline team assist in organising proposals for the panel and informing the board of any developments.

The job does have its lighter moments, with a fair share of unusual enquiries from the public. Karen said: “I have been asked: ‘Is it ethical to ask my dentist out on a date?’ and ‘Can I snog with my denture in?’ There are even a few that have left the team speechless: ‘Can you solve the clue in today’s Daily Express crossword, 8 down 11 letters, dental term for the study of the mouth?’”

As Louise said: “Whether you work on a Helpline or not, Dental Nurses be prepared!”
The research, presented in the Journal of Periodontology, reveals a 34 per cent reduction in risk of preterm births for expectant mums suffering with gum disease if they underwent simple treatment at the dentist or hygienist.

Scaling and root planing treatment, free for NHS-registered expectant mothers up until their child’s first birthday, will remove the build-up of tartar from above and below the gumline in order to reduce the risk of severe gum disease that could potentially lead to tooth loss.

Preterm births are defined as babies born less than 37 weeks into pregnancy, and have historically been linked to poor levels of oral health.

Positive links between successful treatment for gum disease and reducing the likelihood of preterm births have been reported in the past. Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, believes the new research affirms the need for mums-to-be to take care of their oral health during pregnancy.

“Regular appointments with the dentist and hygienist may not be at the top of your priority list during pregnancy, but their importance cannot be underestimated. The dentist or hygienist may be able to give you advice on how to care for your teeth at home if you are suffering from morning sickness, not to mention a thorough cleaning and advice on how to look after your teeth and gums at home.

“Even those with good oral health will experience changes throughout pregnancy. Some women will find their gums will bleed more easily, a problem made worse if you are already suffering from gum disease as so many adults are. As NHS dental care is free for mums to be visiting the dentist isn’t going to impact on those vital pennies ahead of your newborn’s arrival. All you need is to be a registered NHS patient and to have a current maternity exemption certificate.”

Editor’s Notes


A new study has shown how women who have gum disease and are at risk of preterm birth can reduce the chance of early delivery by improving their oral health.
Neglected oral health of elderly a “concern”

More needs to be done to improve the oral health of elderly residents in home-based care, according to a dental charity. The call comes after new research discovered oral health among homebound senior residents was poor and their quality of life was ‘significantly affected’ by the lack of basic dental care.

A similar number of people studied (75.8 per cent) had at least one tooth with severe gum disease. There was also a marked absence of dentures for those with no natural teeth, as virtually none in five (18 per cent) lacked an appropriate denture.

Almost six in ten said they ‘often or always’ had limitations and problems with the type of foods they could eat, speaking clearly, and their general appearance.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, said: “Earlier this year we reported on the lack of dental care for the elderly and the need for provisions to improve. The results of this study further emphasise the scale of the problems they will face if their oral health is continually neglected.

Elderly people have some very specific dental needs with many suffering from decay due to reduction in saliva flow that occur with age or as a result of prescription drug use. If these needs aren’t met and become neglected, you will see the types of problems witnessed in the study, most notably increased tooth mobility, which will eventually lead to losing teeth.

All this occurs at a time when self-care through toothbrushing may become more difficult due to decreasing manual dexterity. It is particularly important for older people to brush twice a day for two minutes at a time using a fluoride toothpaste. Use of mouthwashes to help prevent plaque build-up or products specifically developed for dry mouth can also help them maintain optimum oral care and prevent problems. Demographic projections show that the proportion of people over 60 will continue to increase, so these requirements are really important.

There are dentists who carry out home visits, so it is worth checking in your local area to see if there’s one available.”

Editor’s Notes
We strive to provide you with the largest and best range of products to help you communicate with and motivate your patients.

The income generated from the sale of resources helps to fund our work and activities, including the Dental Helpline, the Dental Helpline and national oral health campaigns, National Smile Month and Mouth Cancer Action Month.

Call now and order a catalogue or place your order on 01788 539 793 or go to www.dentalhealth.org/shop.
COMING SOON

National Smile Month

FOR MORE INFORMATION: WWW.NATIONALSMILEMONTH.ORG