



it all starts with a smile...

## **The Prevention Plan.**

In order to take the best care of your teeth and gums, it is important that you understand the medical background to the dental problems that can arise.

The two main problems are dental decay and gum disorders. More teeth are lost through gum disorders than that through tooth decay. Gum disorders are difficult to treat once they have reached a certain stage of development so dentists recommend very strongly that you aim to **prevent** gum problems before they develop.

We bring you the **Prevention Plan**. If you follow the cleaning routine suggested and use good toothpaste, you can be sure you are looking after your gums and teeth in a way a dentist would recommend.

### **1. DENTAL PLAQUE**

The primary cause of both tooth decay and gum disorders is dental plaque. Everyone has dental plaque. It is made up of millions of bacteria, which build up on your teeth especially around the gum margin and in between teeth. These bacteria find the conditions in the mouth ideal for uncontrolled growth.

You will probably recognize dental plaque as that “furry feeling” on your teeth. It starts to grow again on your teeth almost immediately after you finish brushing them. It is when dental plaque is allowed to remain on the teeth that the two main categories of dental problems can occur: dental caries (tooth decay) and gum disease.

### **2. DENTAL CARIES**

Dental caries, or tooth decay, is caused when the sugars contained in the food you eat react with bacteria in plaque to cause acids. These acids attack the tooth’s enamel to cause tiny holes or ‘lesions’. If these are left untreated they can develop into larger holes or “cavities” eating into the tooth’s vulnerable dentine.

At this stage the tooth can be saved by the simple treatment of a filling. However, once the decay has reached the pulp more complicated treatment must be carried out.



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### **Prevention:**

Caries is most likely to start when the combination of three factors exist:

- A daily diet that contains too many sugary foods and drinks.
- Cleaning, which is not done correctly or often enough (see later.)
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- Lack of fluoride-which leaves teeth vulnerable to attack.

This means eating no sugary foods between meals and carrying out very thorough cleaning twice-daily using good toothpaste. All good toothpastes contain fluoride.

### **GUM DISORDERS**

#### **The background:**

This second problem is more serious because it is less painful, and people are less aware of it. More teeth are lost through gum disorders that form tooth decay.

**Healthy Gums:** Not only feel good but they also look good – they should be pale pink in colour, have a matt surface, a firm consistency and their edges should be finely tapered. They should never bleed when probed by the dentist or during routine tooth brushing or flossing.

**Gums are at risk:** not because of ages but because of lack of care.

**Bacterial plaque:** builds up on the teeth and tends to collect around and under the gum margin. In time the bacteria starts to build up toxins, which attack the gum. This causes inflammation, swelling and occasionally a slight bleeding at the gum margin. The condition



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is called **gingivitis** and the first symptom is often a slight reddening of the gums. If the bacteria attack is allowed to continue over a period of time, the toxins produced will eventually destroy the fibrous connections between the gum and the tooth. The gum will recede or pull away from the tooth, and this is how the **pockets** between the teeth and the gums are formed. As the pockets deepen, the retaining bone structure that holds the tooth will slowly retract and eventually this can lead to the loosening of the tooth, and tooth loss. This is called **periodontal disease**.

If dental plaque is left on the teeth, in time it starts to harden or calcify. This provides an increased area either at the gum margin or in pockets if they exist, for more dental plaque to build up. This accelerates the problem. Once dental plaque has formed calculus (tartar) it has to be removed by the dentist.

### **Prevention:**

The prevention of gum disease is very much in your own hands. If you remove all the dental plaque from your teeth and gums, you should never suffer from any gum problems. If you follow this "Prevention Plan" you can be confident that you are looking after you gums and teeth properly:

Brush your teeth using a good toothpaste. Keep the filaments (bristles) of the brush at a 45-degree angle to the teeth and gum margins. Brush all sides of each tooth, concentrating on a few teeth at a time. Flex the brush filaments against the teeth, moving back and forth on the teeth and gum margins using very short, vibratory strokes in a horizontal plane. For behind the front teeth you may find it helpful to point the brush straight up or down in a vertical plane.

- Using a soft nylon bristle brush.
- Holding your brush like a pen therefore you are only using your wrist muscles.
- By using **slow** small brushing strokes, limiting your movement to 3-4 teeth at a time.

### **Suggested method of flossing:**

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Loop around the middle finger so you have about an inch of floss between the fingers. You can control the movement with your first finger and thumb (see diagrams.) Slide the floss down gently between the teeth and clean both of the adjacent teeth.

Once the area is done wind on anew piece of tape by winding on with the left hand and unwinding with the right. (vice versa with left handers.)

For people with disabilities we recommend some new gadgets called flossettes, please follow the instructions given on the packet.

If you have any questions or would like to be shown how to floss then please do not hesitate to ask at your next visit to the practice.

Cut of about 18 inches of dental floss. Wind the floss around the middle fingers of each hand leaving about 2 inches between the two hands. Tighten the floss ad guide it gently between the teeth cleaning **all** the interdental spaces. Do not press down to hard against the gums.

Remember to visit the dentist regularly to check that both gums and teeth are healthy.

Flossing ideally should be done everyday, but with our lifestyles this is not always possible. So try to aim to floss two to three days a week.

We recommend dental tape rather than floss, as there is less risk of a damage occurring if this is used incorrectly. The dental tape is waxed and as such presents fraying and also slides down between the teeth easily.

**HAPPY BRUSHING !!!**