

## **Practical Advice for maintaining good oral hygiene**

### **How long should I brush my teeth for?**

You should brush your teeth for approximately three minutes morning and night. This is the length of an average music track if you want to time this more easily!

### **How often should I change my toothbrush?**

You should change your toothbrush at least every three months, to ensure the bristles are not too worn and for hygiene reasons.

### **What is the best toothpaste to use?**

This is very much down to personal preference but your dentist can advise on this. The most important requirement is that the toothpaste contains fluoride, which works effectively to fight plaque and cavities.

### **My gums bleed when I brush my teeth. Why is this?**

If your gums regularly bleed when brushing, this may be a sign of gum disease or tartar build-up. You should ask your hygienist or dentist for advice on flossing and brushing to counteract this.

### **I am really unhappy with the colour of my teeth, what can be done about this?**

There are a number of whitening treatments now available for patients unhappy with the colour of their smile. Treatment may vary in price and complexity. Please ask your dentist for more details.

### **I have a wisdom tooth coming through, does this need to come out?**

If your wisdom tooth causes you pain and discomfort on an ongoing basis, it may be that it needs to be removed and you should consult your dentist about this. However, when erupting, wisdom teeth often cause discomfort on a temporary basis and if this subsides, it is unnecessary to remove a healthy tooth.

### **Are electric toothbrushes really any better than ordinary ones?**

Some studies suggest that there are advantages to using electric toothbrushes such as improved cleaning and better removal of staining, particularly for those with limited manual dexterity. However, a manual toothbrush should do the job perfectly well if used correctly.

**I get a lot of mouth ulcers, why is this?**

Mouth ulcers are very common, particularly if you are run down, but if you maintain a good oral hygiene routine, the ulcer should disappear in a few days. If you have an ulcer that shows no sign of getting better after a couple of weeks, you should have it checked by your dentist.

**I suffer from bad breath, what can be done about this?**

Bad breath can be due to a number of causes including tooth decay, infections of the mouth, gum disease, digestive and general health problems and smoking. Your dentist is the best person to advise and there may be a number of things they can do to help.

**My dentist has recommended I wear a mouth guard at night, why?**

Some people grind their teeth at night, often a sign of stress. Grinding can not only cause long-term damage to your teeth, but can cause other problems such as headaches and shoulder tension. If you grind, your dentist may recommend you wear a mouth guard to help prevent you doing so.

**I have very sensitive teeth, is this something to worry about?**

Most commonly, sensitivity is caused by gum recession. Receding gums can leave the sensitive roots of teeth exposed, which can cause pain. Try brushing using less pressure and use a toothpaste designed for sensitive teeth. Gum recession can also cause plaque and tartar to build up: this can lead to more serious gum disease. Your dentist will be able to diagnose and advise on how to manage this.