

In partnership with responsible patients

Smiling Matters

Issue 3

Welcome to the latest issue of our patient newsletter

We get loads of positive feedback to our newsletters and are pleased to hear that you find them interesting and informative.

We think you'll enjoy this issue just as much as the previous ones. In it we look at how you can replace a lost tooth. You will also find articles about root fillings, the effects of

smoking on your teeth and gums, and of course our usual "Q&A" section, answering dental questions raised by our patients.

Miriam Vivian Hazel Heasman Lee Jackson



Miriam qualified at Kings College, London in 1995. She joined the practice straight after qualifying and has been here ever since – a total of nine years. She is now a Senior Associate at the practice.

Miriam followed her Father into the dental profession along with her brothers. Her sister in law and her nephew are also dentists!

Miriam has a special interest in cosmetic dentistry and will soon be embarking on further post-graduate training to develop her skills in this area. If you have any questions about any aspect of cosmetic treatment or would like to know more, Miriam will be very pleased to help you.

Miriam has two young sons (3 and 1) who occupy most of her spare time!



Hazel, our senior receptionist joined this practice in 1990 when Peter became principal. However, Hazel has worked for the previous dentists at Gloucester House since leaving school.

Hazel likes the constant buzz of her job, especially welcoming and helping our patients. She enjoys the long term relationship that she has developed with many patients who have been loyal to the practice over the years, some of whom first arrived at the practice as children and are now parents with young children themselves!

In her spare time, Hazel enjoys keeping fit with aerobics, walking and jogging – she recently took part in the "Race for Life", to raise money for Cancer Research.



Lee joined us in January 2002 in her role as Practice Administrator. She has a different background to most of us here, having studied Business Studies after leaving school.

Her role is to look after everything at the practice, apart from clinical matters, and to help the practice to run smoothly. For example she looks after recruiting and staffing issues, organising staff training, marketing, advertising, finance and lots more besides!

In her spare time, Lee is currently studying to be a Stress Management Consultant, as she has a particular interest in this area and feels that it is a useful skill to have for the future. Her other interests include yoga and art – especially ceramics.

To give your smile an extra boost, you might like to consider tooth whitening. Our teeth can often become stained, particularly by drinking tea, coffee and red wine. They can also become discoloured as we grow older. Tooth whitening is one of our most popular treatments – please ask us if you would like more information.

Did You Know?

The tooth fairy hasn't gone global yet. In Venezuela children believe a mouse will collect their tooth from under the pillow, leaving money in its place, whereas in Chile and Costa Rica, baby teeth are made into a charm by the proud parents.



Bridging the Gap

them. The two crowns are then joined together by placing the false tooth between them and cementing them in place. This is known as a fixed bridge.

Creating a fixed bridge is usually a good option if the teeth either side are strong enough to support the bridge, but are already crowned or have had large fillings. Teeth which are healthy with little if any restorative work done on them can also be used, but there is some concern about having to remove part of a healthy tooth to fit a crown.

Sometimes adhesive bridges can be constructed. These have a lot less impact on the neighbouring teeth because the latest bonding techniques are used to hold the false tooth in place.

In all cases, the colour of the false tooth and the crowns are carefully matched to that of your own teeth so that the bridge looks realistic. They are precisely fitted too so that they feel just like your own teeth.

Losing a tooth, whether it is by accident or because of decay, can be quite traumatic not least because of the effect it can have on your appearance.

But these days there is no need to suffer from embarrassing gaps in your teeth, or to put up with the inconvenience of dentures.

A dental bridge may well be the answer to your problems, providing a realistic-looking replacement which is permanently fixed in your mouth and you brush to clean just like your other teeth.

A bridge is a crown tooth which is fixed to the teeth either side of it. It is usually made of a precious metal such as gold, with tooth-coloured porcelain bonded onto any surfaces that will be visible **to make it look like a natural tooth.**

Most often, the two neighbouring teeth – one on each side – will need to have crowns fixed onto

There are other ways in which gaps can be filled if a bridge is not suitable for your mouth. If you would like to discuss which method would be best for you, please call to arrange a consultation, or speak to us about it next time you visit.



The Buzz on Brushing

Brushing our teeth is such an everyday occurrence that we do it almost without thinking. But

brushing your

teeth correctly can make a huge difference to the health of your teeth and gums and can help you keep them for life.

Tooth brushing should be done twice a day, using fluoride toothpaste. **It is particularly important to clean teeth before bedtime.** This is because our saliva helps to wash away bacteria, thus preventing decay. But at night-time our production of saliva slows down, which means bacteria can be left on your teeth, producing acid which eats away at them.

It is also important not to brush immediately after eating very sugary or acidic foods or drinks. Such foods or drinks weaken the enamel – the hard protective layer of your teeth - and if you brush them straight afterwards it can cause surface damage.

Try chewing sugar free gum for 20 minutes or so instead - it will boost saliva production, wash away harmful bacteria and neutralise the acid. Don't chew for too long though as it could cause problems with your jaw joint.

Your toothbrush should be small, medium or soft-bristled, and should fit easily into all areas of your mouth. **Nowadays electric toothbrushes are very effective at cleaning teeth and therefore are recommended by most dentists.**

Brush for at least two minutes each time, making sure not to brush too hard as that too can cause damage to teeth and gums. Place your brush at an angle of around 45 degrees against the gums, and use small brush strokes. We can demonstrate the most effective method for you if you wish.

Remember to brush each surface of each tooth – the front, back, top and sides, reaching beyond the gumline. It is a good idea to brush your tongue too; the back of the tongue is home to a wide variety of bacteria, including the ones that cause bad breath. **For more information on oral healthcare, please ask – we'll be happy to help.**

Did You Know?

If an identical twin grows up without a particular tooth growing, the other twin will usually have the same tooth missing as well.

Tooth whitening is rapidly gaining in popularity in the UK, with many of our home-grown celebrities leading the way by adding that extra sparkle to their smile and increasing numbers of the rest of us following suit.

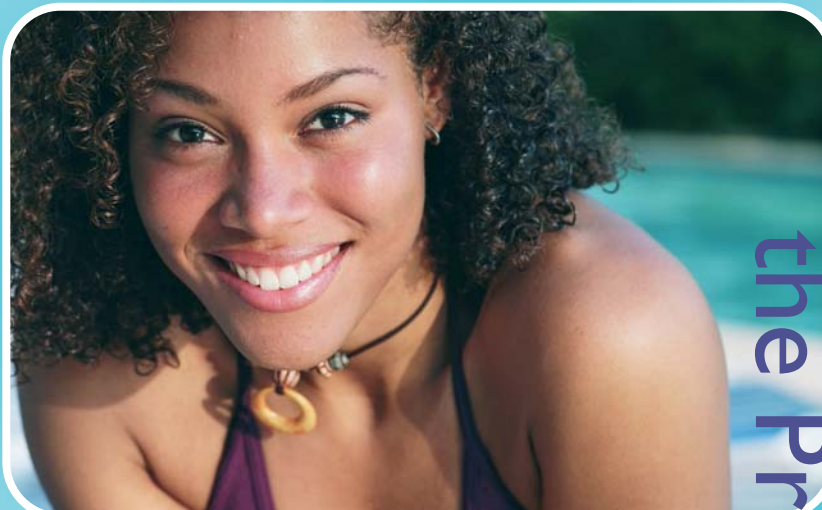
It is easy to see why it is proving such a hit – it is a reasonably priced, quick and painless way of instantly improving our smile, reducing stains and tell-tale signs of ageing by boosting the whiteness of our teeth by several shades.

As with all beauty treatments which capture the public's imagination, there is now a growing number of home kits available in shops and other outlets, but it is still **vital to see your dentist to achieve the best possible tooth whitening results and avoid any costly mistakes and damage to your teeth or gums.**

Darker teeth tend to fall into two different shades – grey-based and brown-based. Brown-based teeth tend to take well to tooth whitening, but grey-based ones often don't, and it is difficult for non-professionals to be able to tell which category their teeth fall into. This can lead to disappointing results from home kits, as well as the risk of damage from acidic products.

Most stains, such as those caused by drinking tea, coffee or red wine or by smoking usually lift well, but again there are some that do not.

If you have fillings or crowns on your front teeth (ie those teeth which are visible when you smile), these have been made to match the colour of your teeth as they are now. Tooth whitening treatments have no effect on fillings or



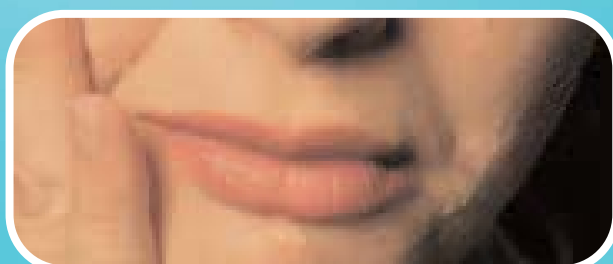
Brighten up your Smile the Professional Way

crowns, which means you could end up with patches on your teeth or crowns. **By taking advice from your dentist, you can avoid the pitfalls and we will be able to tell you if any fillings or crowns could be replaced afterwards to match your new improved smile.**

Finally, dental work should not be done within a week or two of having your teeth whitened. This means that if you whitened your teeth at home and then visited us for treatment without telling us, the chances are that the treatment results will be disappointing – for example a new filling could fall out.

By speaking to us about having your teeth whitened, you will be able to avoid the potential pitfalls associated with over-the-counter kits. We will be able to advise you on the method best suited to you, your lifestyle and your budget.

And we'll be able to work with you to help you achieve a smile you can truly be proud of.



Going back to the Roots

Until recently, root canal treatment was viewed by many people as the dental treatment to try and avoid at all costs, and one that most would hope never to be told they needed.

But the reality is that modern root canal procedures provide an excellent way of saving a tooth which, in the past, would have been extracted.

Root canal treatment is needed when the pulp of the tooth becomes infected through decay or injury. The pulp lies inside the tooth, and delivers its blood supply and nutrients.

If the infection is not removed, it can spread throughout the root canal system of the tooth and cause an abscess (which can be extremely painful), and can lead to damage in the bone around the tooth. Without treatment, the tooth is likely to have to be removed.

Root canal treatment involves removing the infected pulp and filling the root canals. This can take two or three visits to complete. First we will make the tooth and its surrounding area numb so you won't feel any pain. Then we seal it with a special filling material which helps avoid any potential problems in the future. Often the tooth is left weakened by the decay, so we may recommend fitting a crown to strengthen it.

As with all our treatments, we will talk you through the procedure and do our best to put you at ease. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask - we'll be happy to help.

Why Smoking *will* Spoil Your Smile



If you are a smoker, you will have heard the arguments in favour of giving up so many times that the strongest of anti-smoking messages probably makes no impact on you at all.

Even though most of the warnings are designed to scare you into giving up, they tend to focus on hidden parts of the body such as your lungs and heart. That, combined with the inevitable “it will never happen to me” mentality that many of us adopt, means that you are likely to simply carry on lighting up.

But there is one area where smoking can have a far more visible effect, and more quickly – your smile. The fact is that if you smoke, your teeth will become stained very quickly, turning yellow and then brown. In addition you will be much more prone to gum disease – the primary cause of tooth loss among adults – and you are also much more likely to suffer from facial wrinkling.

In short, smoking ages you – but with care and attention from the dentist you can at least work on keeping its ageing effects at bay.

One of the most noticeable effects of smoking is staining of the teeth from nicotine and tar. Teeth can turn yellow very quickly once you take up smoking, and can turn brown over the years.

Tooth whitening can help bring the sparkle back to your smile, though if you carry on smoking afterwards you will have to have regular top-up treatments.

Gum disease can create huge problems for smokers, with twice as many smokers being toothless by the age of 65 as non-smokers. People who smoke are more likely to develop gum disease, and because smoking causes a lack of oxygen in the bloodstream the infected gums cannot heal.

If gum disease is left untreated, it will progress and in time your gums will pull away from your teeth, your teeth will loosen and eventually they will fall out.

This is why it is vital for smokers to visit our practice regularly for professional cleaning, which removes hardened plaque from your teeth, helping to prevent gum disease. Better still, why not consider stopping for good?

For more information about beating the effects of smoking - or giving up - please telephone, or ask next time you visit us.

Q. My friend hasn't seen a dentist for years, and is now suffering from toothache – and bad breath. She says she is too nervous to see a dentist – how can I help her to conquer her fear and get her teeth looked at?



A. Your friend is not alone being anxious about going to the dentist - it's been estimated that up to 20% of the population avoid going to the dentist because of anxiety about treatment. There are many reasons why people are afraid of going to the dentist, including pain, fear of the unknown, feeling out of control whilst in the chair, and for many a previous bad experience dating back to childhood. These days a trip to the dentist need not be something to fear! Explain to your friend that dentists these days are very understanding of the problems of anxious patients and will do all they can to help put them at ease. Encourage your friend to pick up the phone and make an appointment, explaining their anxieties when they call. Perhaps you could come along to the dentist with them – they would probably feel a lot better.

Q. I keep getting sore spots in my mouth. What is causing them and should I see my dentist or doctor about them?

A. It sounds as if you are suffering from mouth ulcers, which are painful red or yellow sores inside the mouth. Usually if you have just one it tends to be as a result of damage caused by, for example, biting your cheek or badly fitting dentures. But sometimes if you are under stress or feeling run down, you can often get several sores at once. This is a common problem – the exact cause is not always known but it is not infectious. The soreness can be relieved with gel or lozenges which you can buy from a pharmacist, or by rinsing with mouthwash or salt water. The ulcers usually disappear after a few days, but you should always see the dentist if they last for more than 2-3 weeks, if you are also unwell, or if the ulcers keep coming back.

Questions & Answers