

ralph **palmer gilhooly**
& associates

'word of mouth'

Issue 4

Welcome to the latest issue of our patient newsletter.

New Hygienist



We are delighted to have **Kathryn Waters** with us to cover for Lucy whilst she on maternity leave.

Kathryn qualified as a dental therapist in 1990 at Curtin University in Western Australia. In 1992 she obtained her Dental Hygiene Diploma at Kings College London and has been working in private practice ever since.

Kathryn recently obtained a BSc with Hons in Osteopathy and now enjoys both of her careers. Kathryn is looking forward to meeting you all and taking care of your oral health.

Congratulations Lucy

We are very pleased to announce that our hygienist **Lucy Baxter** is now the proud Mum of a beautiful baby girl.

Baby Millie was born on the 10th February and both mother and baby are doing well. We would like to send our best wishes to Lucy and we look forward to seeing her back with us in August.

Opening hours

Monday	9:00am - 5:30pm
Tuesday	8:30am - 7:00pm
Wednesday	8:30am - 7:00pm
Thursday	8:00am - 5:30pm
Friday	9:00am - 2:00pm



Good Luck Anna

Our Practice Manager **Anna Iwanicka** has recently moved on to pastures new. While we were of course sad to see Anna go we would like to wish her all the best with her new career in marketing. Anna would like to thank all the patients that she worked with since joining the practice in July 2002.

A Brighter, Whiter Smile with Zoom!

One of the most popular cosmetic dental treatments is tooth whitening. Teeth can become stained by drinking tea, coffee and red wine or by smoking, and they also tend to darken with age. Having a whitening treatment can remove stains, and can take years off the way you look by giving you the sparkling smile of your dreams.



We use the **Zoom! Chairside Whitening System** which dramatically whitens your teeth in a little over an hour – ideal for anyone looking for immediate results. It is a safe, effective and very fast scientifically advanced procedure. The convenience of Zoom! in comparison to days of wearing trays or strips, makes it the perfect choice for the busy individual.

The procedure is simple. It begins with a short preparation to cover your lips and gums, leaving only your teeth exposed. We will then apply the Zoom! whitening gel which is activated by a special light. The gel and Zoom! light work together to gently penetrate your teeth, breaking up stains and discolouration, leaving you with a sparkling, whiter, brighter smile.

If you would like more information on Zoom! whitening, why not give us a call, or ask during your next visit?

Veneers – the facts!

Dental veneers have had a lot of media attention lately, especially in the TV make-over programmes that are so popular these days. We've had a lot of patients asking what they are, and whether they're as good as they seem, so we thought it would be a good idea to give you a few facts about them.

Dental veneers definitely live up to the image they have been given. While we would be the first to admit that they will not solve every cosmetic dental problem, they can certainly provide the answer to many of them. Patients who have had them fitted have been absolutely delighted with the results.

Veneers are very thin layers of porcelain that are bonded to the front of your teeth. Some people describe them as being like false fingernails for teeth, but in fact the veneers are much thinner than false fingernails and will not dislodge like false nails do. They last considerably longer – typically about 10 to 15 years.

Because they are bonded to the front of your teeth, they can disguise a lot of imperfections including staining and natural darkening of the teeth, stained tooth-coloured fillings, chips, and cracks. They also enable some people to have a whiter smile than they may be able to achieve with tooth whitening.

Their versatility also means we can use veneers to hide gaps between teeth, to make crooked teeth appear beautifully straight and to disguise misshaped or worn teeth.



In short, veneers can transform your smile, and it's not unusual for patients to report back that they have also changed their life. This may sound extreme, but these patients had been so self-conscious about their teeth for so long, that it was holding them back. Having a new smile gave them the confidence to become more active in many aspects of their lives and to start fulfilling some of their long-held wishes.

If you would like to have your smile enhanced with veneers, please ask about it during your next visit, or arrange a no-obligation consultation with us.

Why visiting the dentist could save your life!



In the UK, someone dies of oral cancer every five hours. The number of new cases has risen steadily since 1995, to 4,300 cases a year, and the mortality rate is a frightening 50%.

The figures are grim, yet according to new research, if it is discovered in its early stages, your chances of survival can be greatly improved.

This makes it absolutely vital for you to see us regularly, so we can not only check for tooth decay and other dental problems, but also examine you thoroughly for any potential signs of mouth cancer.

The disease can affect any part of the mouth, tongue, lips or throat, and is particularly common in people aged over 40, especially if they smoke, drink alcohol, or have a poor diet. Those who smoke and drink at the same time are up to 30 times more likely to develop the condition. But even people who do not fall into any of these risk categories can still develop mouth cancer.

The early symptoms of the condition are minor, and are often ignored by sufferers. A sore or ulcer in the mouth should be looked at if it does not heal within three weeks. Medical advice should be sought immediately for a white or red patch on the gums, tongue or the lining of the mouth; a lump; or difficulty in swallowing .

If you notice any of these symptoms, or anything unusual in your mouth, lips or throat that lasts for more than a couple of weeks, please make an appointment to see us as soon as possible. We will be able to give you a thorough examination, and either reassure you or, if we feel further investigation is necessary, refer you for further tests.

If you have any questions about mouth cancer, please ask us. Alternatively you can find information on the websites of the British Dental Health Foundation www.dentalhealth.org.uk, and the Mouth Cancer Foundation, www.mouthcancerfoundation.org

The new signs of a mid-life crisis?

A staggering one in two adults in the UK who are approaching middle age would consider having dental treatment to improve the way they look, according to new research.

Top of the list for wanting smile enhancements are those in the 36 to 45 age bracket, of whom 98% feel that a smile is very important to a person's overall attractiveness.

The National Dental Survey was carried out by the British Dental Health Foundation, and highlights the increasing interest among patients in improving their smiles.

Developments in modern dentistry mean there is now a large choice of ways in which a smile can be enhanced, with a minimum of discomfort.

Tooth whitening is popular across all age ranges, and is often viewed as a beauty essential before a big event such as a wedding, special anniversary or a graduation ceremony.

Whiter teeth make you look healthier and more attractive, and because teeth darken naturally with age, a lighter smile can also take years off you. The procedure is safe and effective, and surprisingly affordable too.

Often it can be just a small imperfection that you're not happy with, such as gaps between your teeth, or chips and cracks which have appeared over the years.

In many cases we can use bonding to disguise such blemishes. This is a simple and gentle procedure which uses a material similar to that used for tooth coloured fillings. In very little time, chips, cracks and gaps are disguised, leaving you with a great-looking smile.



Porcelain laminate veneers are great at disguising a multitude of problems – for more information on these, please see our article opposite.

Even if you have teeth that are partly or completely missing, there are still a number of ways in which we can help. Dentures, crowns and bridges have all advanced enormously in the way they look and feel.

Dental implants are a strong, permanent and very realistic way of replacing one or more missing teeth. They can also be used to provide a secure and more comfortable base for dentures.

For information on how you could enhance your smile, please talk to us at your next visit, or book a consultation with us.

Abscess agony

Anyone who has suffered from a dental abscess will know just how painful they can be. They can affect either the root of a tooth or the gum, or sometimes if you are particularly unlucky they can appear in both places at the same time.

Abscesses can result from infection in the gum and/or tooth. Tooth abscesses occur after a tooth has died, perhaps as a result of decay or accidental damage. The pulp inside the dead tooth becomes infected and the tooth becomes extremely painful to touch or to bite down on.

Normally we will drain the abscess, although on some occasions, such as if the infection has spread, we may prescribe anti-biotics. Once the tooth has settled down we will usually recommend either root canal treatment or an extraction

A painful tooth does not necessarily mean you have an abscess, but it is certainly recommended that you see us as soon as possible.



A gum abscess can occur if you suffer from gum disease. Gum disease causes the gum to gradually come away from the tooth, leaving a 'pocket' between the gum and the tooth, and this pocket can become infected.

Again, we will usually deal with the abscess immediately, but on occasion may prescribe antibiotics. We will usually recommend specialised gum (periodontal) treatment to prevent it re-occurring, or extraction of the tooth within the infected gum area.

To help avoid dental problems including abscesses, it is vital to have a good daily oral healthcare routine, including brushing your teeth twice a day (especially at bed time) and cleaning between your teeth and underneath the gumline.

It is also important to see us for regular examinations so we can spot any potential problems at an early stage and treat them before they progress further.

DIY smile treatments

– dispelling the myths

Home-grown beauty treatments have always been popular, from beer shampoos to avocado facemasks. So with the booming interest in dentistry, it is little wonder that some people are suggesting similar methods for boosting their smile power.



Most of us would love our teeth to be whiter. Although professional whitening is surprisingly affordable, there are always those who prefer to find a cheaper way of making their teeth brighter.

Lemon juice is known for its apparent ability to lighten hair, but should never be used to whiten teeth. It contains natural sugars, which lead to decay, and is also very acidic. Regularly drenching your teeth in lemon juice or other acidic substances will cause the acid to eat away at the enamel, causing long term damage through tooth erosion.

Other DIY bleaching methods are to be avoided too – it is absolutely vital that only the proper whitening agents, in the right strength, are used on your teeth, which means getting them whitened professionally.

Drinking tea is often said to stain your teeth, but on the other hand, it also contains fluoride, which is good for your teeth – though it is still no substitute for brushing with fluoride toothpaste. It goes without saying that tea is only good for your teeth if it has no sugar added to it.

Many people believe that the old adage “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” applies to the dentist as well. Apples are certainly good for you, and any dentist would agree that eating plenty of fruit and vegetables each day is to be encouraged. But all fruits contain natural sugars and acids, which can damage your teeth, so rather than snacking on them it is best to include them with your daily meals.

One story which has a factual base is that cheese and milk can benefit your smile. Cheese is ideal for eating at the end of a meal as it helps to neutralise acids which occur naturally in many foods and drinks. Dairy products are also great sources of calcium which helps to build and maintain bones and teeth, but do eat them in moderation as they can have a high fat content.

If you're tempted to test any unconventional approaches to tooth care, please don't. You put the health of your teeth and gums at risk. Instead, ask us how to enhance your smile – we'll be happy to help.

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Questions & Answers

“A fissure sealant is a very thin, protective plastic coating which is painted onto the biting surfaces of these back teeth, and can reduce decay by up to 65%.”

I have recently been diagnosed as having diabetes. I've heard this can affect your teeth – is this correct?

Diabetes can make you more susceptible to gum disease, which is the biggest cause of tooth loss in adults in the UK. Gum disease is caused by a constantly-forming film of sticky bacteria called plaque. The plaque irritates the gums, making them become red and swollen, and they become infected. If left untreated, the disease progresses to its more serious form, periodontitis, and can lead to tooth loss. The good news is that gum disease can be avoided or controlled with a good oral healthcare routine. Make sure you see us regularly so we can professionally clean your teeth to remove the plaque, and advise you on the best way to care for your teeth at home. You should always advise us if you are diabetic, as the condition can also lower your resistance to infection and can affect how long it takes for surrounding tissues to heal. If you are taking any medication for your diabetes, please let us know so we can update your records.

My friend has suggested I ask my dentist to put a sealant on my children's teeth to keep them healthy. What is a sealant, and what will it involve?

Your friend is talking about fissure sealants, which are used on back teeth to help prevent them from decay. The top surfaces of the molars have pits and grooves which are so tiny it is very difficult to clean them properly, and so they can easily become decayed. In fact, over 80% of tooth decay occurs in these teeth. A fissure sealant is a very thin, protective plastic coating which is painted onto the biting surfaces of these back teeth, and can reduce decay by up to 65%. The procedure is quick and pain-free, and the sealants usually last for many years. Sealants are usually only applied on permanent teeth, which appear between the ages of around 6-14 years of age. Please ask about them next time you bring your children for a check-up examination – we'll be happy to discuss them with you further.

Did you know?

In 1994 a prisoner in West Virginia, USA, plaited dental floss to make a rope and escaped