



**Bite**

# Word of mouth

10 AUG 2012

## Featured

# The Dental Hygienist— your smile's best friend

These professionals are the unsung heroes in the ongoing brush against cavities, gum disease and tooth loss. Often considered just an adjunct to the real doctor—dental hygienists take a much more proactive approach to your oral health than any dentist ever will.

Dentists see a 'hole' and they fill it. Dental hygienists actively work to prevent the cavity from forming in the first place. Over the lifetime of your dental appointments, you'll spend far more time with your hygienist than any other staff member of the practice, so it pays to get to know them well!

Your dental hygienist is a graduate of a formal educational program, most commonly a Bachelor of Oral Health—a three-year degree program in Applied Science. All dental hygienists in Australia must be licensed by the state in which they practice.

A day in the life of a dental hygienist—so what do they do?

On a typical workday, a dental hygienist

will see 8-10 patients. Your visit will begin with questions about your medical and dental history, and may include the taking of x-rays. These questions are probably the most important part of your visit as it helps us tailor your dental care both at home and at the practice. So do let us know how you're going with brushing and flossing as most patients are amazed at all the little tricks and tips we have to make this easier and prevent problems arising in the future.

Next, your hygienist will perform a check for periodontal or gum disease. The aim here is to catch these in the early stages, before they become big problems with intensive treatment and poorer outcomes. That's also why we recommend a

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## This month...

...our focus is on dental hygiene.

To get your oral health into its best shape you'll spend much of your time with a Dental Hygienist. But what do they actually do and how are they different from Dentists? Our feature article answers this and gives you some insights into the role of Dental Hygienist.

We're also transforming our Handy Hints section into Healthy Hygiene Hints put together by Bite's own Dental Hygienist—Jenna.

We hope you enjoy our August issue..

Dr Simon Franks



> continued

regular visit every 6 months.

Now, it's time to get the tools out. The next step involves removing any tartar, plaque or stains from your teeth. It's not a patient's favourite thing—and we understand that—but it is necessary to keep your teeth in good shape. Let us know if there's anything we can do to help you. If that headrest is a 'pain in the neck' we can adjust it and give you a pillow for greater comfort. That light can be repositioned so it doesn't shine in your eyes, but still lets the hygienist see inside your mouth. We're always attentive to your comfort level, but it helps if you let us know if something bothers you!

#### Raise Your Right Hand

Bite Dental hygienists are acute readers of their patients' body language, but these signs can still be misinterpreted. Is that grimace a genuine reaction to pain—or just to an annoying sound, like the drill



in the next room? We encourage a signal both you and your hygienist will understand, before the tools come out. A simple raising of your right hand can mean 'back off.' This is very useful when the hygienist hits a tender area—much better than trying to turn your head or jerk away from pain. That's one thing you don't want to do when there are sharp instruments in your mouth! It can also be used to pause when you need to cough, swallow, sip some water or blow your nose.

The final step with the hygienist is to have your teeth polished and flossed. Before you leave, the dentist will examine your teeth and gums once more, and discuss any problems found and their recommended treatment. Your hygienist will also

make sure you understand how to brush, floss and carry out other self-care practices at home—and when you're done, you can head back into the world with your smile at its brightest!

*Jenna*

#### News

#### Bridge to Brissy



Our healthy team members Cassandra and Jenna have pulled out their trainers and are entering the Bridge to Brisbane fun run this year. Hopefully they'll get some Olympic inspiration—don't forget to ask how their training is going!!

Celebrate everyday heros. Let us know if you have a cause you'd like us to shout about.

#### Healthy Hygiene Hints

##### Dry mouth - hydration

There's one constant in the mouth & that is that SALIVA is the force that keeps everything in balance!

We can all suffer from a dry mouth at some point, for example when we are stressed or nervous. But for many people I see this is a regular problem. Dry mouth is a side effect of over 400 different types of medications. So if you are taking three or more types, it is most likely that you have a dry mouth. Dehydration is the other major cause. 1-2L of water each day is recommended and honestly most people don't hit that mark

My tip this month is simple—drink more water! Carry a bottle every day and get through that 1L until it becomes a habit! You will notice the difference & so will we!

*Jenna*



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