My Teeth are important

“My Teeth are important”, is the feedback when asking people about their teeth.1

By Jordan

A majority of the people asked, confirmed that their teeth are more important than other high interest personal care categories, for example hair care and even skin care. The reason for this is that we need our teeth to be healthy and strong in order to eat the things we like eating, throughout our lifetime. In the past, it was an assumption that as long as your teeth look healthy, they were healthy. That is not the case for today’s older adults who are keeping their natural teeth longer than ever before. More and more people are even keeping their teeth throughout their lifetime.

What many people do not know, is that the risk of cavities increases with age. One of the reasons is dry mouth, a commonside effect of many prescription medications. About 40% of people experience dry mouth when taking a specific type of medicine that could cause tooth damage. Another reason is that nerves inside the tooth become smaller and less sensitive. By the time you feel pain from a cavity, it may be too late.

So how can you best take care of our teeth, so that they last our lifetime? The answer lies in daily care and regular visits to the dentist or hygienist. Follow the dentist’s recommendation and brush twice a day, and use, at least one ounce of a fluoride product of choice to clean where a toothbrush cannot reach. Fluoride strengthens teeth and reduces the risk of decay, so it is important that the toothpaste contains the recommended amount of fluoride. Dentists also recommend a soft toothbrush that has good reach in order to clean back molars and difficult areas in the mouth properly. Diet and lifestyle also affect teeth and gums; so stop smoking and minimizing the intake of alcohol and other sugary drinks are important steps to make. By daily removing plaque on and around teeth, as well as along the gum line; teeth and gums have the best chance of keep ing and performing well. There are several factors that affect our brushing results. How we brush and how long we brush is one of the most central Dentists recommend brushing for two minutes to get the best results, but few people actually do this. 50% of health care recommendations are not practiced. People also have a bad conscience when it comes to brushing their teeth. They know they should brush better and put more effort to keep their teeth healthy for life. Another study shows that men are notably less likely to brush.3

75% of women brush their teeth the recommended twice a day versus 60% of men. Women are also flowering more frequently than men.

Here are a few suggestions for taking care of the teeth:
- Use a toothbrush that feels comfortable to hold. These are different shapes and sizes. In a study it was found that the design of the toothbrush affected the way people brushed and that people had a preference for how they brushed. If you can hold the toothbrush in a light grip (not clasp fingers around the toothbrush) it makes it easier to turn the brush a few times when you brush, you most likely prefer a slimmer, precision style handle. On the other hand, if you prefer a thicker handle you probably have a more static power grip.
- The size of the head comes in different sizes and the preference is also personal. The important thing is that you can easily get to the head around your mouth in order to reach and properly clean all areas.
- The bristles are shaped can affect performance. Dentists recommend soft bristles that are gentle to tooth enamel and to your gums. It’s important that the toothbrush leaves you feeling clean and does not irritate the softer gum tissue.

Keeping our teeth strong and healthy is important and it’s our daily efforts that help us achieve that goal.2

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By Dr David Alexander, Singapore

With the Minamata Convention on Mercury signed in 2013 and its pro posed phase-out of mercury contain ing compounds, including dental filling, dentistry has entered a new era in which new and less harmful filling materials as amalgam are increasingly gaining importance. This year at IADM, an entire symposium will be dedicated to that topic. Speaking on the topic, Dr David Alexander spoke with presenter Prof. Hien Ngo from the University of Queensland in Australia about the post-amalgam era and its impact on dental practice.

Dr David Alexander: Why is now the time to be organising such a detailed symposium on dental restorative materials?
Dr Hien Ngo: The scope of the Minamata Convention is much wider than merely banning mercury compounds. In 2014, the FDI World Dental Federation issued a policy statement on dental amalgam supporting the recommendations of the Minamata Convention, which in cludes phased-down of amalgam. As this material has been one of the mainstays of dentistry for over 150 years, how amalgam impacts on the way dentistry is practised every day will need to start preparing today.

Surely with all the various tooth coloured restorative materials available we are already in the post-amalgam era?
You are right, with the wide choice of tooth coloured restorative materials and their improved performance, we are well equipped to deal with the post amalgam era in dentistry. However, the call by the FDI and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for the phase-down of amalgam, rather than the removal of amalgam from our profession, indicated that these materials, even if not that new, still have important roles in many parts of the world. This is mainly because of its permanent cost, long term and high record technique tolerance. There are billions of amalgam restorations still in service and the search for the ideal tooth replacement material is still ongoing.

In preparation for the eventual removal of amalgam, the FDI policy statement stresses that authorities should work with the dental profession on a comprehensive global dental materials research agenda together with effective preventive strategies in the post-amalgam era, the profession has to focus on both prevention and preservation means to the management of dental diseases.

Briefly, how did the United Nations treaty on limiting the use of mercury come about?
It started with the realisation of the negative impacts of mercury on the environment when it leached into this issue in 2001. By 2003, it had become very clear that there was enough evidence to recommend re ducing the use of mercury globally. However, by ingeniously replied that there was insufficient voluntary action, so it was decided to step up through a process of introducing an internationally binding measure. This was the birth of the Minamata Convention, which was finally signed in 2013. Today, over 128 nations have signed it.

As far as dentistry is concerned, what will be the main changes in everyday practice?
The main changes include focusing on managing dental diseases, early detection and empowering patients to take personal responsibility.2 When repair is required, the focus should be on maximum preservation of tooth structure. This can be achieved only with the use of adhe sive dentistry and not amalgam.

In order to gain public confidence, dental practitioners should demonstrate con ditioning and commitment to safe handling practices, education-based patient-centred preventive care and commitment to safety. The symposium will have a panel of the latest advances in mercury-free restorations and participants will have the opportunity to test and evaluate the restorations.

Clearly the environment is at the heart of the treaty and the conse quent changes in the practice of den tistry, but what do you see as other benefits to both the dentist and, of course, the patient?
The research stated that using free mercury has been well acknowledged by the dental profession. Waste management and safe handling of amalgam have been observed, and the time well regulated. One can ar gue that, for the majority of dental practitioners, the transition to tooth coloured restorative materials hap pened a whole back before. These materials have much improved performance and they are now very popular.

The main objective of this symposium is to bring together a group of excel lent scientists and clinicians to share their knowledge and expertise, and enable a greater understanding of the opportunities for oral health and dental practice in the shift towards the post amalgam era of dentistry.

By attending the symposium, will dentists be able to gain sufficient knowledge and skills to handle the changes required in their practices? The secret to success in responding to this call to action is to focus on preparing for the new era. The symposium is intended to provide participants with an understanding of the rationale behind the phase-down of amalgam, and participants will gain practical knowledge on tooth coloured materials, learn new skills in the selection and application of these materials, and be able to communicate the significance of the changes to members of the dental team and patients. At the end of the day, participants will feel ready and empowered to embark on this journey, knowing that they can sufficiently be able to handle the changes required in their practices.3

Interview: “The focus should be on maximum preservation of tooth structure”
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* Love your teeth
Where the magic happens

What goes on behind the scenes at Philips? We find out how in-lab research and years of innovation helped create Philips Zoom! whitening

By Philips

Tooth whitening has been at the forefront of cosmetic dentistry for years – centuries, even. Its history can be traced back thousands of years, long before the toothbrush was invented... and certainly before dentists were around.

Philips has been at the centre of this journey for years. Away from oral healthcare, the first Philips' patent dates back to 1905 – an invention by Gerard Philips to extend the burning time of a light bulb. The company has been innovating light research ever since, so you can bet Philips knows a thing or two about adapting light for optimum tooth whitening.

Six shades lighter

Last month, Aesthetic Dentistry Today attended a live demonstration of Philips Zoom! Whitening in its lab, learning about the science behind the way.

Dr Nigel Young, lead research scientist at Philips, says that when it comes to whitening, patients want something that works – which may sound obvious. But most of the time, patients are looking for 'instant gratification,' and often, home whitening will not last as long, or be as effective, as professional chairside whitening.

Here's where Philips comes in: Zoom! knows a thing or two about adapting light for optimum tooth whitening.

By Philips

Safety first

Tooth whitening is a complex mix of chemistry and physics, and Philips has ensured that it works with the right researchers to understand the process behind whitening.

Philips works with four of the world's top 50 universities and partners with leading academic institutes in the UK for oral healthcare, including the Eastman Dental Institute and King's College London.

Dr Young says the lab at Philips headquarters in Cambridge is where the magic happens: 'The team assessed Philips Zoom! whitening here, looking at pH levels, sensitivity tests, experiments in a dark room, as well as ensuring extracted bovine and human teeth were not dehydrated to skew results. In vitro testing of coffee, tea and red wine stains on extracted human teeth were also conducted.'

Follow-up, Dr Young says, is essential: 'As a team, we've been researching this area and product since 2002, and made absolutely sure that Zoom! was safe and effective for use.'

The only way is up

Philips is keen to invest, research and innovate in oral healthcare, maintaining its position as one of the key figures in the dental industry. The company aims to improve the lives of three billion people by 2025 on a daily basis, and bring this healthy living into prevention, diagnosis and therapy.

Dr Young also emphasised Philips' role in future oral healthcare, saying: 'Our aim is to push oral healthcare to the forefront of general wellbeing. The main question we ask ourselves is: how can we make people more aware of how to take care of their body?'

'We came to Cambridge for a reason – we work with some of the best researchers in the world, and we hope to continue this learning and innovating long into the future.'

Myths about whitening

- Heat does not accelerate whitening
- Hydrogen peroxide is not activated by blue light (as it is colourless)
- Dehydration actually causes 'false' whitening
- Home care whitening has a place, but it can take longer to achieve ideal results
- Zoom! does not harm enamel or exacerbate tooth sensitivity.