



## show us your smile

Caring for your smile is an important part of taking care of your overall health. This is why we remind our patients every six months that you are due for a routine examination and cleaning. Usually we send a 'postcard' but now, in deference to very busy people who communicate invariably by email, we are also sending emails. Our email reminders that checkups are due are sent to those of our patients who prefer us to also confirm appointments via email, or SMS.

If you prefer to receive email reminders that your six monthly checkup is due, just let us know next time you come to see us. We still like you to call us to make an appointment though, as this is much more effective in making sure you get the date and time that suits you best.

# smile talk

## overcome dental anxiety

Dental anxiety can be a major barrier for many people in maintaining their dental health and having the best and whitest smile possible.

Prevention is always the best course of action to stop problems before they arise. This means practicing good oral hygiene at home and attending regular dental check-ups and cleanings. Unfortunately people who suffer from dental anxiety often fail to visit the dentist for routine care. Indeed, some otherwise very rational people can be overcome by anxiety and simply avoid seeing their dentist altogether. When they finally do go, usually it is not because their teeth are discoloured, broken and unsightly, but because they are experiencing pain or ongoing discomfort they can no longer endure. Thus it is, that often a small preventable problem has progressed into one requiring major dental intervention.

The most Common Dental Fears and Phobias include

- 1 Fear of needles
- 2 Dental office smells and sounds
- 3 Previous negative dental experiences (often as a child)
- 4 Embarrassment of a dental condition
- 5 Sense of confinement (loss of control and feeling claustrophobic)

There are varying degrees of dental anxiety. Trembles, sweating, tears, even gagging. We cannot stress enough to anxious patients that modern dentistry has progressed significantly over recent years and there are many procedures that are now painless - really! Injections can be painless and anaesthesia is more quickly effective. Modern equipment, better materials and up to date methods ensure greater patient comfort. Ceiling televisions in the rooms provide an enjoyable distraction and head-phones are available if you don't like the noise of the drill.

For extreme anxiety, ask your dentist about the various relaxation techniques used in the clinic, such as IV sedation and Nitrous Oxide (laughing gas). Never self-medicate prior to dental treatment without discussing this with your dentist beforehand as it could pose a



danger if your dentist administers anaesthesia or other medications.

Other useful means to reduce anxiety are to

- avoid scheduling appointments at stressful times, such as just before a major business meeting; and
- bring a friend or family member for support.

Parents should be mindful that children have no preconceived ideas about visiting the dentist and have no reason to be fearful. It is best that parents keep their own childhood trauma stories to themselves. And never, ever threaten a child with a visit to the dentist to make them behave. This is almost guaranteed to create long term dental anxiety.

Remember, the single most important way to help overcome your fear is finding a good dentist and that means someone who is patient, clearly communicates the various options and recommendations, has a no pressure approach and genuinely cares about you.



## wisdom teeth and orthodontics

Wisdom teeth are the third molars – those that are furthest back in the mouth. Molars are important for chewing, but evolution has meant that wisdom teeth no longer play a role in the mouth. Problems with wisdom teeth tend to occur because the mouth is not large enough to accommodate them, and hence they become impacted – growing sideways, or even remaining trapped under the gum. Wisdom teeth are notoriously difficult to clean, and even if they don't erupt, they can still become decayed, or cause decay and periodontal disease in the adjacent healthy tooth.

How is this relevant to orthodontics? Often patients think that if orthodontics is necessary, so too will be the extraction of the wisdom teeth. However, in general the third molars do not cause orthodontic relapse or crowding. The reason why this is such a strongly held belief is that it is almost normal for the anterior teeth (especially the lower incisors) to crowd up in the late teens or early twenties. This happens whether or not the patient had braces (or even wisdom teeth) and is probably related to late lower jaw growth. Since this is the same time that

the wisdom teeth try to erupt it is very easy to confuse cause and coincidence. Sometimes in order to save the wisdom teeth, which are bigger and more difficult to remove, additional room for tooth realignment during orthodontic treatment is made by extracting premolars. In effect the dentist makes a decision when growth is complete as to whether there is sufficient room for the third molars to come in to a self-cleaning area. If there is room, but the teeth are not coming in correctly, then the decision is between whether a partial orthodontic appliance to get the third molars aligned is justified, or to just extract them as unnecessary teeth.

In other words, it is your general dentist who will advise whether the extraction of the wisdom teeth is desirable. There is nothing extra that the orthodontist can add to this particular decision, except in rare cases when there is sufficient room but the third molars are erupting incorrectly. The patient may then consent to additional orthodontic treatment.

## did you know?

A 2006 Swedish study has shown that the strongest predictor of poor oral health behavior (defined as tooth brushing less than twice per day) in adolescents, was male gender. So what do we do to get those boys brushing twice per day and ideally flossing once per day? No study yet, to our knowledge, has solved that conundrum. So if any parents have a proven solution, please let us know so we can share it with all our patients!!

Source: American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

## announcements



Dr VicPearly Wong

While we are sorry to advise that Dr Stefan Vaz has left our practice, we are delighted to introduce Dr VicPearly Wong. More detail about her background can be found on our website at [www.smilefocus.com.sg/sf-news](http://www.smilefocus.com.sg/sf-news). Dr Wong is a specialist practitioner of Invisalign ("invisible braces") and Damon orthodontic systems.

We are also delighted to introduce Jayne Stephen and Laudemer Perez as members of our customer services team.



Jayne Stephen



Laudemer Perez

Jayne is a new arrival from Edinburgh with a great background in dental. Her lovely, soft Scottish burr adds yet another harmony to our multi-cultural team.

Laudemer is experienced in the customer services role, and he brings a wealth of positive energy and good humour to share.

