

We may think we look after our teeth, but we could be ignoring something vital, says Ruth Adams

# Brush up on teeth



Professor Eder looks into the cause of excessive tooth wear

**S** PREVENTION better than cure? Pilot studies are currently taking place in NHS practices to discover if it is preferable to slant payments towards NHS dentists for preventative work, rather than focusing on treatment for existing conditions.

Professor Andrew Eder, clinical director of the London Tooth Wear Centre in Wimpole Street, has a deep interest in the lesser-known problem of tooth wear. A different problem from tooth decay and gum disease, this occurs when teeth simply wear down or dissolve over time.

In the past, this problem was not highlighted but today, as we live longer and aim to keep a fully functioning set of teeth into old age, we should all be aware to the signs that our teeth are wearing excessively and consult a restorative dentist to take action.

Professor Eder points out that an early diagnosis results in simpler treatment, such as monitoring. Unfortunately this is a “slow burn” problem – wear on the teeth is usually relatively painless and can be easily ignored by the patient.

Signs include teeth becoming short, rough, sharp or sensitive.

There are three main causes of excessive tooth wear:

- Attrition – through tooth grinding and clenching
- Abrasion – through a poor brushing technique or an abrasive diet
- Erosion – from eating acidic foods and drinks or stomach acid problems

If signs of excessive wear are noticed, either by a patient or their dentist, then the cause of the wear needs to be identified, as the treatment varies. If tooth grinding is wearing the surface of the teeth away, a simple mouth guard worn at night may be the answer.

If a poor brushing technique is the problem, a lesson and advice from the dentist in the correct technique may counteract years of future problems.

If acid erosion is the cause, this may occur though drinking too many fizzy drinks or fruit juice or it can be a sign of bulimia or anorexia, for which specialist help is available.

Tooth whitening is another area where dentistry is advancing. Michael Korb, at the Dental Health Centre in Woodford Avenue, Gants Hill, explains that tooth whitening was discovered in America, back in the 1980s, when dentists advised children undergoing tooth-straightening treatment with braces to rub a tiny amount of hydrogen peroxide on their teeth to help with cleaning. The unexpected consequence was much whiter teeth.

Previously, acquiring whiter teeth

required expensive and ultimately destructive choices, involving crowns and veneers. But nowadays, for most patients, tooth whitening is quick and virtually pain-free.

Patients spend 15 minutes having an impression made for a gum shield and have a second appointment to check the fit and receive instructions on how to put the medical grade hydrogen peroxide into a teeth-shaped-dish that fits snugly inside the mouth.

One hour a day for 10 days at home is then all it takes to achieve significantly whiter teeth. The frequency of periodic top-ups will be advised by Michael Korb. At the Dental Health Centre in Gants Hill, this process costs £200.

For those in a rush, Michael also offers a speedy one-hour power bleaching treatment, which achieves the same effect but is not as long-lasting. This treatment is particularly useful for special occasions, for example a wedding, a barmitzvah or an interview.

Michael Korb advises that without exception tooth whitening must be carried out by a qualified dentist to avoid problems.

For more information on tooth wear see [www.restorative-dentistry.co.uk](http://www.restorative-dentistry.co.uk) <http://www.dental-healthcentre.co.uk/dr-korb.htm>

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A prestigious maternity unit is reborn

## The family way

**S**HE ALREADY wears Princess Diana's engagement ring and earrings. So who knows? When the time comes, maybe the Duchess of Cambridge will, like her husband's late mother, choose to give birth in the The Lindo Wing.

The private unit at St Mary's Hospital attracted global attention when Princess Diana gave birth to Prince William there in 1982 and to Prince Harry, in 1984.

If Kate does choose The Lindo Wing, she'll enjoy even greater comfort than her late mother-in-law did in the 1980s. The unit – which specialises in complex surgery, gynaecology, urology, as well as obstetrics – is currently undergoing extensive refurbishment.

When it opens in early 2012, the 16 private en-suite rooms in its obstetrics unit will all have satellite TV, a radio, a safe, a bedside phone and a fridge. The walls will be graced by prestigious artwork – and patients won't even have to pack a vanity bag, as toiletries will be on the house. Other hotel services will continue to be part of the package, with kosher and vegetarian meals bookable in advance.

However, nice though it is to be spoiled, what you really want when you bring your child into the world is the assurance that you are in the safest possible hands. And that's the overwhelming reason you should choose The Lindo Wing which, since its opening in 1937, has developed an international

reputation for handling complex pregnancies and multiple births as well, of course, as low-risk deliveries.

Its consultant-led team has 24-hour access to St Mary's world-class NHS facilities and consultants work with highly experienced midwives and nursery nurses. If you or your baby require additional support, critical care and specialist neonatal facilities waiting are ready and waiting on-site.

In addition, the unit offers parent-education classes to help you prepare for the delivery and advice on caring for your newborn. Courses are open to new parents and for those who already have children.

Mothers will be able to choose from bespoke care packages including such items as a suite of rooms for your stay, postnatal care, a nanny service and the parent education classes.

Once the luxury of the Holland Park demographic, maternity nurses are now increasingly hired by working women in less privileged postcodes. In London, many of them are turning to Sleeping Babies, an agency run by Alex Keisner and Nicole Wall. Maternity nurses can be hired on a nightly basis. At Sleeping Babies this costs £11 to £14 an hour, plus a nightly £20 fee.

For writer and teacher Susan Isaacs it is money well spent. “I breastfed my daughter during the day, and the nurse bottled her by night. It meant I could sleep, recover relatively quickly from my Caesarean and it took the strain off my husband in those early weeks.”