

# Dr. Arjun Kachhala's top ten tips to look after your teeth

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, or so the saying goes, but a recent study by Simply health has revealed that 3 out of 4 women believe that their career will suffer as a result of having bad teeth.

Over half of those questioned even claimed that they wouldn't take a colleague to a meeting if they had bad teeth and 1 in 5 said that an unattractive smile or bad breath would stop them from hiring someone.

Here Dr Arjun Kachhala offers his top tips for making sure your teeth stay healthy and clean.

## 1. Visit your dentist regularly

Dr Kachhala says:

"You need to go and see your dentist and hygienist at least every six months. Classically people would go for a routine check for gum disease and tooth decay and you may think you don't need to bother, but these days we are looking for many more problems, such as erosion, and can even spot signs of serious health problems."

## 2. Avoid acidic drinks

Many people think they are taking the healthy option when they drink a smoothie or fruit juice, but Dr Kachhala points out that this isn't the best choice for your teeth. He says: "Smoothies, natural juices, cordial, concentrates and diet drinks are very acidic and erode the enamel on your teeth, which is why your teeth feel sticky after you drink them." The answer? Drink water.

## 3. Work on your smile

Dr Kachhala believes that being happy with your smile can improve your social life, job prospects and boost your self-esteem. "You can tell a lot about a person just by looking at their smile and on all these makeover programmes on television the smile is the icing on the cake. So many people are asking to change the way their smile looks nowadays. There are many options available and its not necessarily as expensive as you might think."

## 4. Clean your teeth properly

Brushing and flossing is essential, but so is knowing how to do it correctly, says Dr Kachhala. "Our hygienists will show you how to take proper care of your teeth. Flossing in particular takes practice but once you get the hang of it, it won't take you any time at all. You can also use small bendable ('Te-Pe') brushes to get into the spaces between your teeth if flossing is difficult, and they come in many sizes. You should also find a mouthwash with an active ingredient that will kill bacteria. We can provide what you need."

## 5. Use an electric toothbrush

Once again, these are great as long as you know how to use them. We can show you the right technique. Dr Kachhala says: "When you get it right then electric toothbrushes are

much better than regular brushes, a fact that is consistently supported by ongoing research. Vibrating, sonic ones are better than rotating ones, and make sure its one where you have to place it on a stand to recharge it, rather than one which requires household batteries. The investment will be worth in for your gums in the end.'

## 6. Don't smoke

There are few worse things for your teeth than smoking, says Dr Kachhala. "There are myriad reasons to stop smoking, obviously, but there is so much evidence to say that smoking exacerbates gum disease. I've seen it so many times myself. Smoking really makes it more difficult to look after your teeth, not to mention the social disadvantages such as bad breath and yellowing teeth.

## 7. Don't drink too much tea or coffee

Once again the healthy option isn't always the best for your teeth, says Dr Kachhala. "I see a lot of people who lead a healthy lifestyle but have stained teeth. That's because most herbal teas, though they won't damage your teeth, are black and will stain them. Just look in your cup after a drink. Red wine and coffee can have a similar effect."

## 8. Listen to your body

Sometimes your dentist is just as likely as your doctor to spot the cause of problems such as neck, shoulder or head pain. Dr Kachhalai says: "Most people would never think these problems had anything to do with their teeth, but, for example, neck pain could be down to clenching or grinding of teeth."

## 9. Prevent night-time teeth clenching

Dr Kachhala says: "You can't wear your teeth down by eating as our diet today is so soft. If people come to me with worn down teeth then it's because they grind them in their sleep. Come and see us and if this is a problem for you. We can give you various types of mouth guard that will solve the problem."

## 10. Only Whiten your teeth with your dentist's supervision

Don't bother with over the counter whitening kits - Dr Kachhala acknowledges the fact that not everyone can afford to have an expensive tooth whitening treatment, but stresses that kits sold in pharmacists and shops aren't worth the cash. "Whitening kits just don't do anything and if you want your teeth whitened you need to do it properly. Start by talking to us to find out what the options are."