



DENTAL UPDATE

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FRONT TEETH

A smile is important. It conveys health and self confidence and it says – 'I am friendly and approachable'. Here are some ways to improve the look of your smiling apparatus.

WHITENING

We all know instinctively that youngsters have lighter teeth than the folks with the Seniors Cards. As people get older their enamel does get tougher and harder but also more dark and yellow. Whitening makes teeth and faces look younger.

Most people seem to think their teeth are too dark. In fact the colour of most teeth is half way between average and ordinary. Normal is usually about the same colour as the whites (the sclera) of the eyes. On the other hand, if you would *like* whiter teeth, that is a good reason to have them lightened.

The best, most reliable way is with **Home Bleaching** where a thin plastic mouthguard tray and a gel of carbamide peroxide is worn for a couple of hours each night. Whitening usually takes between two and five weeks. The effect is safe and long lasting and has been studied and proven over twenty years.

The process does not damage the enamel. The only complication is the occasional case of sensitivity but this is easily overcome by applying a toothpaste such as Neutraflur Sensitive.

For more on whitening, see the leading world authority's website - www.vanhaywood.com.

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ONLY IN AMERICA

Reports are coming out of the US about dentists advising the parents of young children to have their newly erupted front teeth bleached.

As you know, kiddies lose baby teeth and get their first adult incisors at about the age of six. These are usually very white but not as starkly opaque as the little milk teeth. Most erupt looking normal and healthy.

Families returning from America say dentists are starting to comment 'Don't worry. If you do not think they are white enough we can always do bleaching in a few years.'

This is rather bizarre. It is like saying - Your seven year old does not look suited to the Olympics or the catwalk, but if we implement a supplements program early enough... *Well, you get the idea.*

Happily most Australian families are too sensible for this sort of salesmanship.



WRONG, WRONG, WRONG

People ask me how long I am going to keep practicing. Sometimes I feel like answering – 'til I get it right.

Trouble is, *just right* keeps changing.

Students are told when they start uni that half of what they are taught will later prove to be wrong. The professors just do not know which half.

Since my time at dental school, here are some truths which turned out wrong –

Cavities have to be hollowed out to keep fillings in place. *Wrong.*

Every bit of decay has to be drilled out. *Wrong.*

Dental problems do not effect general health. *Wrong.*

Dental research keeps on advancing. It is an exciting time to be a dentist.

CROOKED TEETH

Orthodontics is the best way to straighten front teeth, even for adults. The technology is now quite advanced so bands and braces work much quicker than previously. They can even be placed on the inside of teeth so they are completely invisible. For simple cases the Invisalign system can align incisors just with wearing invisible celluloid style plates, like paper thin mouthguards.

On the other hand orthodontics still takes some time and is quite expensive. Many cases can be improved with reshaping enamel and bonding, using 'composite resin' to effectively change the position of the teeth.

Today's white filling materials are made to be tough and strong but also to match the colour and opacity of real teeth. But they can do more than just fill cavities. Because they adhere or **bond** to enamel they can also alter the shape and alignment of front teeth. The treatments usually take just a couple of appointments.

A few years back I published an article with the ADA entitled *Mimicking Tooth Straightening* about how the profession can make smiles appear straight when patients do not want orthodontics. The paper is available on our website or alternatively a copy may be picked up at the clinic. The photographs give an idea of what can be accomplished in one or two visits.

COMPOSITE FACINGS

Composite facings are a variation on the porcelain veneers one hears about. Veneers are like false finger nails, produced in a laboratory after the front of a tooth has been drilled and glued on using a cement. They can look very good but are brittle and are difficult to repair if their edge chips. They are also expensive.

Facings are different. They do not require any drilling, are done in one appointment using composite resin which adheres to the enamel and can be readily modified or repaired.

There are all sorts of ways to find out about these facings. Our nurses can answer many of the questions and there are lots of photos in our before-and-after album. Perhaps the best way is to check the article I published last month on *Managing The Peg Lateral* about restoring pointy front side teeth using the technique. Again copies can be found at the clinic or online.



COLGATE SLIM SOFT

Most of the gimmicks added to new toothbrushes actually make a reasonable brush less effective. Cross action heads, rubber inserts and tongue scrapers in fact reduce efficiency – they are just there for marketing.

Colgate recently released a no frills toothbrush that is simply well designed. The *Slim-Soft* has a small rounded head but a higher number of soft, flexible bristles packed in. Colgate claim they taper to a much tinier tip than other brushes, so they are less inclined to scratch at the enamel.

The important feature is the flexibility – soft bristles bend more to reach where the plaque usually lurks, in the hollows between the teeth and around the gums. In other words, they get into the crevices.

Hard brushes, and even aggressive electric brushes, tend to skim over the surface. They will clean the easy parts but not where the plaque collects and problems occur. Scrubbing with these brushes will never whiten a smile. Hard brushes actually *yellow* the teeth, by abrading the white enamel and exposing the dark dentine beneath the surface.

A better answer is to brush hard, around in circles but with soft brush that actually reaches the plaque.



MOUSSE

Tooth Mousse hardens enamel and reduces sensitivity by pumping calcium and phosphate into the surface.

When there is early superficial decay it can sometimes even arrest the decay and correct the softening.

But it also leads to less plaque accumulating because food debris and bacteria find it a greater challenge to stick to strong, sound enamel.

If teeth are weak there are all sorts of reasons to rub in Tooth Mousse a few times a week.

THE BEST OF THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA

People ask, Don't you get tired of driving up from Mt Eliza each day? Well, I do by the end of the week, but it is worth it. The neighbourhood is nice, the air is clean and there is so much to like about the Mornington Peninsula. Next time you are out for a Sunday drive, here are just a few of the personal favorites you should check out on the peninsula.

Red Hill Market



This is the biggest and best community market in Victoria with over three hundred very high quality stall holders. Young blokes and husbands usually tend to get dragged kicking and screaming to craft markets, but this one is more like a large village fair with all the good bits and less of the padding.

There seems to be some strict criteria to granting a stall holder's permit. On display is everything from boutique beer and platters of paella to jewellery and hand made furniture. Most of it is worth having a look at.

The market runs on the first Saturday of every month from September to May and is located on the Recreational Reserve, Arthur's Seat Road.

Tutti Frutti Gelateria

Everyone likes a really good ice cream but sometimes the gelatis can be out of this world. Tutti Frutti (in Blake St. off Main St. Mornington) is sensational – the sort of ice creams that are even tempting in winter. The hazelnut, chocolate and coffee are standouts. Just remember to clean the teeth when you get home.

Pier Ten Restaurant and Vineyard

Pier Ten is not the most exotic, expensive restaurant in the Red Hill area but, after a long scenic drive, it is welcoming and cosy. Families will not feel out of place. The food is somewhat predictable but is hearty and reliable. The whiting and chips and osso bucco are standouts. Of the wines, the Pinot Noirs and Pinot Gris are particularly good.

See www.pier10wine.com.au.



Phaedrus Vineyard

There are over fifty vineyards on the Mornington Peninsula. Most produce good wines with the cold climate aspect of the area lending itself especially to pinot noir and savignon blanc. It is difficult these days for any vineyard to be commercially viable and most that survive are either run as personal hobbies or are supported by large and slick restaurants.

Phaedrus is a little different. There is no swanky café, no plush tasting room and not a great deal of marketing. The wines, however, are worth investigating, in particular the pinot gris.

Many people are uncertain of the difference between pinot grigio and gris. In fact the two wines are from the same grape but there is great variation in how they are presented. The grapes are fast to ripen, producing a high sugar yield, so there is a natural tendency for the wine to be sweet and floral. If the grapes are picked early the wines will remain crisp and slightly acidic; if later, rich and tacky.

The better wines may be late picked but are usually afforded extra attention and handling. They are allowed to mature and therefore the sugars more fully ferment away producing a higher alcohol level and colours and flavours that are richer. The Phaedrus Pinot Gris is one of the better ones and certainly deserves trying.

Point Nepean

After all the eating and drinking, some of us might appreciate a stretch of the legs. The Point Nepean national park is at the extreme end of the peninsula overlooking the southern part of Port Phillip Bay, Bass Strait and, separating the two, the infamous Rip.



If a bit of a hike is not to one's liking a bus will take visitors much of the way but the last, most interesting section must be negotiated on foot. The old concrete gun battery was originally installed well prior to WW1 to protect the bay and, in fact, the very first shot fired in anger in the Great War came from the fort when a German merchant vessel tried to enter the shipping channels.

The scenery is spectacular and the sense of hands-on history is fascinating.

'THE HANGOVER' AND THAT TOOTH



Dentists are always good for a laugh in the movies. The Hangover is a successful film series, now up to its third episode, but there is one scene in the original that really stands out. This is where the conservative young dentist wakes from a wild night in Las Vegas with his buddies to find he has an incredible headache, memory loss and an extracted front tooth. Not only that, it seems that, after having his drink spiked, it was *he* who extracted his own tooth by way of a dare!

Most times directors want to depict a missing tooth, the incisor is simply blacked out, but this looked as if it really was removed at short notice. The effort suggests an actor with one heck of a negotiated contract.

In fact, actor Ed Helms' tooth was already missing, congenitally absent from birth and, when not in front of the movie cameras, replaced with an implant. The base, which stays fused to the bone, remained in place but the visible tooth of metal and porcelain was unscrewed for the movie.

In the old days replacing a front tooth was a minor nightmare. It meant either constructing a partial plate or placing a bridge, supported by crowns cemented over the neighbouring teeth. Neither was an ideal solution. Crowns, for instance, require extensive drilling, which occasionally leads to nerve damage of the underlying teeth.

Today an implant can be inserted directly into the gap, sometimes with no time delay between surgery and new tooth.

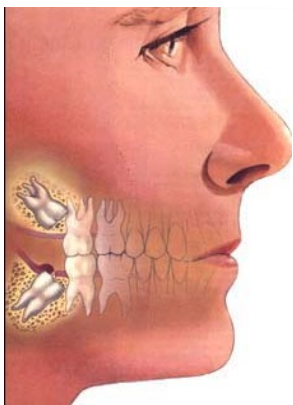


The work is costly and should be done by a specialist but the success rate is high. Another less expensive approach is to chemically bond a new composite resin tooth onto one of the neighbours.

My advice is – if you want to replace a missing tooth find out the *pros* and *cons* about the various techniques. And of course never accept drinks from strangers, especially when holidaying in Vegas.

SHOULD WISDOM TEETH BE EXTRACTED?

A few lucky people do not have wisdom teeth and some even luckier ones have wisdom teeth that are completely erupted and harmless. Most of us, though, get stuck with back teeth that are half in, half out. In other words – impacted.



It is the impacted lower wisdom teeth that usually cause the trouble. The gum that partly covers them readily collects bacteria and, when these multiply, the surrounding area will occasionally become infected, swollen and painful.

It is sometimes difficult to predict whether these jammed in teeth will definitely lead to infection but it is usually wise to not take the risk. The teeth are more easily removed when individuals are younger and, when a specialist performs the surgery there is absolutely minimal chance of complications, such as nerve damage.

Strangely enough, lower wisdom teeth that are deeply stuck in the jaw, well below the surface, do not cause infection nearly as often. This is just as well because they can be difficult to extract. Upper wisdom teeth rarely cause more than an inconvenience.

'THEY SAID I WAS BRUSHING TOO HARD.'

We hear this all the time.

Patients complain of cold sensitivity and present with tender little grooves at the necks of their teeth.

Many dentists tell their patients they are brushing too hard. In fact the mistake is probably brushing too much **sideways**.



This is what damages the gums and scratches the roots, making them tender to, say, cold water.

A better approach is to close the jaws slightly to relax the cheek muscles and brush hard in large circles.

This will clean better and avoid abrading the gum and delicate tooth roots.