



Dr Grant McAree

# Ask Dr. Grant



DR GRANT IS A RENOWNED COSMETIC DENTIST, TREATING PATIENTS BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. HE IS THE ONLY COSMETIC DENTIST IN THE REGION GRANTED PRACTISING PRIVILEGES AT NUFFIELD HOSPITAL, EXETER

## Looking after your teeth – what’s the story?

### What are we talking about?

All the things you can do to look after your teeth by preventing plaque build-up, guarding against gum disease and cutting back on things that can damage teeth. There’s no reason why, with care, your teeth can’t last you a lifetime. Dentures are not an inevitability of old age.

### Brush your teeth

To maintain healthy teeth and gums, it’s important to keep your teeth as clean as possible. Brush twice a day for at least two minutes, preferably with an electric toothbrush, as these have been shown to be more efficient than manual brushes at removing plaque and to lessen the likelihood of brushing too hard, which can lead to tooth wear and receding gums.

### Clean between your teeth

Brushing alone isn’t enough; use floss or interdental brushes at least once a day and alcohol-free antibacterial mouthwash to reach where your brush can’t and to get rid of as much plaque, food debris and bacteria as possible. Bacteria attack plaque and food debris, converting them into acid which weakens the enamel and is also one of the main causes of bad breath.

### Go for a hygiene appointment

The advice today is to have your teeth professionally cleaned twice a year. Regular

brushing alone will not remove plaque deposits in hard-to-reach places, which can cause gum disease if left untreated, whereas a professional ‘scale and polish’ will.

### Go for regular dental check-ups

A good dentist doesn’t just check for decay but also for gum disease, tooth cracks, tooth wear and for medical conditions including oral cancer. Prevention is not only better than cure, it’s also better for your pocket – if problems are allowed to develop, they can become more costly to put right.

### Beware of food and drinks that can damage teeth

Acid erosion and staining can be caused by consuming certain food and drinks. Acidic foods like oranges and vinegar and drinks like juices, squash and fizzy drinks are a potential danger to your teeth. Acid softens the enamel so it’s more easily worn away which, over time, can result in cavities. Dark-coloured or pigmented drinks like red wine, tea, coffee, cranberry juice and cola can all stain teeth. If they can stain your clothes, they

can stain your teeth. So cut back on acidic and teeth-staining drinks and use a straw with cold drinks to help minimise the impact on enamel.

### Give up smoking

There are few worse things for your teeth than smoking. It’s not just about staining and bad breath – smoking increases the risk of oral cancer and there’s evidence to suggest it exacerbates gum disease too. It also restricts the blood supply to the bones holding your teeth in place, which can result in wobbly teeth and restorative dental work being more problematic and therefore costly.

### Any final thoughts?

If you’ve been putting off going to the dentist, know this: dentists are there to make things better and can use various techniques to help you relax. Better still, treatments can now be carried out pain free. Find a dentist you can trust and who listens to your concerns so problems can be sorted early on. You never know – it might just be the best New Year’s resolution you’ll ever make. **DL**

**“PARENTS ARE THE BONES ON WHICH CHILDREN SHARPEN THEIR TEETH”  
– PETER USTINOV**

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