Oral Hygiene Instruction and advice

What is the best way to brush my teeth if I have gum disease?

We will provide individual advice to show you exactly how to clean your gums and teeth and the best cleaning aids, or adapt the techniques you are using already. Brushing regimes may vary between individuals depending on what they use, when and how long for but the basic elements of a good oral hygiene regime are:

- **Interdental brushes are essential!** - Cleaning the spaces between the teeth where the bristles of the toothbrush cannot reach using ideally an interdental brush or floss where a brush is too tight. Interdental brushes vary in size and you need to use the brush that fits 'snugly' between the teeth, touching both teeth surfaces as it goes in between. Your dentist or hygienist will check which interdental brush sizes fit the best and show you how it should feel when using the brushes.

- **Use the largest interdental brush that you can get through the spaces**. Most people will have 2 or 3 different sizes of interdental brushes as one size does not fit all! Using more than 3 interdental brushes can sometimes make brushing more complicated and harder to carry out regularly.

- **Use interdental brushes over floss**, but floss where you cannot get an interdental brush through.

- **Angle your toothbrush towards the gum line** when using your manual or electric brush – a useful and effective technique is to angle the brush at 45 degrees towards the gum (up towards the gum line for your top teeth, down towards the gum for your bottom teeth). You should then use small sweeping motions (small round circles and side to side) to disrupt the bacteria. By tipping the brush towards the gum line you will see and feel the bristles of the brush get under the gum slightly.

- **Use an electric toothbrush!** – We find that most patients find an electric toothbrush more effective and easier to use. It can also help to control the pressure you put on the gums, reducing the risk of gum recession.

Useful tips!

- The key is not always in how long you spend cleaning your teeth but how well you do it. It's in the detail! You need to be able to dedicate at least 5 minutes or more at least once a day - think of your brushing as a 'biological clean' to fight the disease and not just a 'social' clean.

- You need to be able to find a time that suits you to do this, for most people this is in the evenings. You need to be able to maintain this regime for the rest of your life, even after treatment as gum disease can come back. We will help you to find an effective but simple and realistic enough routine that you can maintain.

- It is helpful to try and split your mouth into quarters.

- Start with the interdental brushes, cleaning all the back spaces first, then the front ones. This will take up half of your brushing time and ensure most problem areas are clean. Then pick up your electric brush or manual brush and brush the insides before you brush the outside surfaces and biting surfaces (this way you are brushing the difficult areas first).

- Mouthwashes can be helpful to help reduce soreness of the gums and make it less tender for you to use the interdental brushes. They can be particularly helpful in the early part of treatment when the gums are bleeding more or sore, during or after professional deep cleaning. Use a mouthwash if you feel you are struggling to clean parts of your mouth with a brush. But do not rely on a mouthwash!

- Keep things simple and realistic. The key is in the detail not just the time you spend.