



The dental hygienist, the central asset in our practice.

What does a dental hygienist do?

Many patients appear to be unclear about the role of the dental hygienist and the amazing benefits that they can provide to patients in a dental practice. It is the intention to explain their role and a number of the benefits that you can enjoy from visiting our dental hygienist, Sharon Everett. While dental hygienists may be male or female, the vast majority are female so I will use "she" with no discrimination intended!

Toothbrushing has to be taught

It has always surprised me that one of the few articles that you can buy in the shops that come with no instructions is a toothbrush and yet it is one of the most difficult things to use efficiently. Sadly many patients are left to fend for themselves and do the best they can with their toothbrush but it would be far more beneficial if patients were all taught the best way to remove plaque, and the best brushes to use to achieve effective plaque removal consistently.

Advice on whether to use a conventional brush, a basic electric brush or a sonic electric brush can be provided by the dental hygienist and she can teach the best way to use whichever brush is suited to a patient's individual needs.

In toothbrushing, "often" does not necessarily mean "effective"!

It is unfortunately the case that many people think they are doing a great job with their tooth cleaning and plaque removal simply because they brush three times a day. However this is often far from the truth. A toothbrush can be used very effectively or it can be used in a way that leaves most of the plaque in place on the teeth.

Some tooth surfaces are difficult to clean

Plaque is a very sticky substance and it is no easy task to remove it from all tooth surfaces. Cleaning between teeth is a real challenge and floss is often not used or badly used. Certainly flossing is not popular but there are alternatives cleaning techniques.

It is not the intention to discuss techniques here but this is one of the key roles of the dental hygienist who will be happy discussing the various technique that are available and the various types of brush on the market. She will also be happy to discuss the various electric brushes that can be used and can help you decide on what will work for you.

Homecare is the patient's responsibility

Improved plaque control is the responsibility of the patient but the dental hygienist maintains observation of the patient over time and supports their efforts to try and motivate them and encourage improvement in plaque control to improve their oral health.

Improving the effectiveness of plaque removal by patients at home is the most important aspect of helping patients to improve the health of their gums and minimise tooth decay.

The hygienist helps with nutritional advice relevant to dental disease

While removing more plaque frequently is going to reduce decay, the reduction of sugar intake in all its forms, will have a profound impact on reducing tooth decay. Unfortunately sugar is one of the common additives in all processed, packaged and tinned foods. It is not only used as a preservative but food manufacturers use it to enhance flavour and in doing so increase their profits. We call this "hidden sugars". They are discussed more in other articles on the website addressing preventive dental care.



The hygienist therefore is very well educated in nutrition as it relates to dental disease and plaque and she will be able to discuss your diet and help you find the sources of sugar, hidden or otherwise, and thereby reduce the risk of more decay and gum disease by helping the patient make better choices.

Dental hygienists treat tooth temperature sensitivity

Another common problem faced by “modern man” is tooth sensitivity. This can arise from many causes but, of all the causes, the daily use of acidic soft drinks, diet drinks and sports drinks appear to be the most common cause. Many of these drinks are so acidic they will dissolve the tooth enamel.

There are a number of simple and effective procedures that the dental hygienist can perform to help eliminate sensitivity that can be a very painful symptom that causes patients distress when drinking cold drinks or consuming cold foods.

The traditional role of the hygienist

The most traditional role of the dental hygienist is the cleaning of the teeth by removing tartar deposits (also known as calculus), soft plaque and stain. In the past this was achieved using hand instruments that were scraped across the tooth surfaces but nowadays thankfully this is unnecessary.

The hygienist will now use high frequency minimal vibration handpieces with fluid flowing over the tip to remove hard deposits from the teeth. In our practice this is a Piezoscaler and it is a very effective yet gentle instrument for cleaning teeth.

Soft plaque and stains can be removed using a relatively new instrument known as the “Air Flow” that uses fine abrasive powder under air pressure. It is extremely gentle and leaves the tooth surfaces feeling beautifully clean and smooth. Normally the tooth is then dressed with either a fluoride varnish or Tooth Mousse, a remineralising gel.

Hygienists can treat more severe gum disease

Dental hygienists are also able to provide the deep root cleaning that is required in the treatment of severe gum disease. This is referred to as root surface debridement, root planning or deep cleaning.

Not all hygienists are comfortable working deep below the gum margin and so this treatment is usually only provided by highly trained and experienced hygienists who have worked alongside a specialist in periodontics.

Sharon Everett, our highly experienced dental hygienist

NQ Surgical Dentistry is privileged to have Sharon Everett who has worked alongside Periodontists while she was serving in the RAAF and since then has been working closely with Dr Colin Priestland who although registered in Australia as a Dentist, is a former Specialist in Periodontics in the UK and European Union.

A full range of dental hygiene services is available

The full spectrum of dental hygienist clinical services is available at NQ Surgical Dentistry with Sharon Everett. With over 20 years experience and unrivalled communication skills she is able to explain treatment, provide advice on home care and answer any of the questions that patients have. She can work with her patients to optimise their oral health.

In younger patients the hygienist can help to prevent dental decay by modifying the shape of the biting surface of the molars and premolars to reduce the tendency of plaque and food debris to become impacted into the deep fissures of the teeth. This is done by conditioning the surface of the teeth and then coating the tooth surface using a resin that sets hard and fills the deep fissures thereby preventing future “fissure” decay. This is a process called “fissure sealing”. Such fissure sealants are not permanent and will not last forever. They may need to be replaced from time to time.



Regular cleaning of the tooth surfaces and the root surface just below the gum margins will help prevent gum disease and maintain a set of stain free teeth. We suggest our patients see Sharon for a full clean every 6 months. Some patients may need to be seen every 4 months depending on their clinical situation.

Sharon constantly strives to extend her dental knowledge and achieve excellence in her clinical skills by regular continuing education and professional development. She is extremely popular with her patients and a wonderfully caring and talented yet a modest member of our practice team. We all feel privileged to work alongside her.