



## CASE STUDY

### **Why we focus on Oral Health first, rather than ‘drill and fill’**

### **Case history**

After months of suffering severe facial pain as a result of several undiagnosed abscesses, 41 year old Anne is finally on the road to recovery following a lengthy course of complicated root canal treatment. Her new dentist, Dr Ben Atkins, was keen to improve Anne's general level of oral hygiene to try to avoid the need for further dental intervention and to ensure she would keep her teeth, rather than facing the horror of needing multiple extractions.

## Patient's Perspective

### What effect did severe dental pain have on your oral health?

It had a terrible effect. The pain was so bad that on a lot of days I couldn't contemplate trying to brush my teeth at all. I tried to get away with using mouthwash but that really didn't do any good at all.

### What worried you most about your teeth?

As well as the pain and worrying that they looked horrid, there was always that nagging worry that I would end up having to have lots of extractions.

### What happened when you visited the dentist?

Dr Atkins was very understanding about how nervous I was. First of all we talked about teeth cleaning. I use an electric toothbrush and he showed me how to use it properly. He explained that many people use electric toothbrushes, but that their technique doesn't help the brush to do the job required.

He also told me that there are Apps you can download onto your phone, like Brush DJ, which support my cleaning regime.

### Was it easy to learn a better way of cleaning your teeth?

Electric toothbrushes are easy to use and they are relatively inexpensive to buy nowadays. The instructions that Ben gave me were straightforward and common sense. I'm now cleaning my teeth better than ever and focussing on particular things too, like gum health, which is really useful.

### Has your new brushing regime helped you improve your oral health?

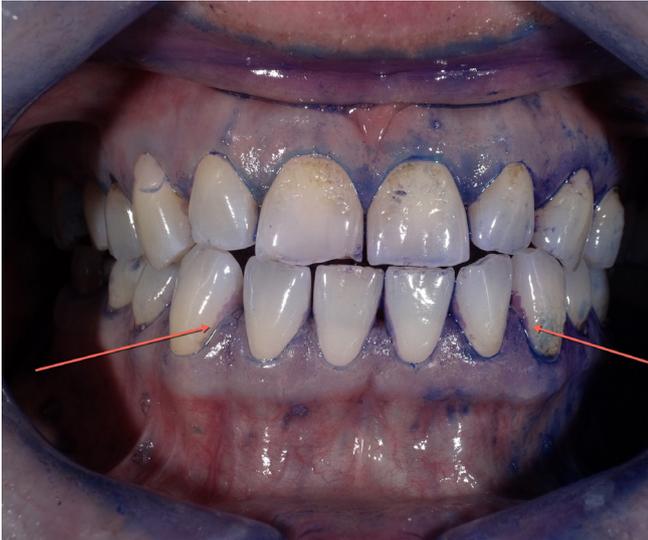
It's been amazing. Usually if the dentist shows you how to do something, even if you listen really carefully, it's very hard to remember everything when you get home. But that just wasn't the case. It was easy to understand and remember.

### What difference has better oral health made to your day to day life?

I used to be really self-conscious about how my teeth looked before but I've now started to feel far more confident now about social occasions. My step daughter is about to get married and I'm not dreading the photographs any more – instead I'm just really looking forward to the whole day. I feel so much better about myself - smiling is coming naturally to me now.

## Technical knowledge

Owing to the high levels of pain she had suffered over an extended period of time, Anne had really struggled with trying to maintain a good level of oral hygiene as her mouth was too painful to brush her teeth. Anne spent time with an Extended Duties Dental Nurse (EDDN) to show her how to improve her own oral healthcare. In line with NHS guidelines which focus on better prevention leading to a reduction in invasive treatment, once a significant improvement has been achieved, then a treatment plan can be introduced.



Before



After

At Anne's first return visit, one a week later, straight away the blue plaque had reduced. This is why oral hygiene is so important. Without this none of Dr Atkins work would last more than 3 years. More decay would develop and more treatment would be needed.

**As a result of Anne's hard work, new fillings could last for 20 years.**

After just a few more weeks of improved brushing technique, Anne's oral hygiene has massively improved. Dr Atkins could see the improvement in brushing after a few weeks, at a follow up appointment. He used disclosing gel on Anne's teeth to demonstrate to her the improvements she had made. Anne, learning how to brush her teeth effectively, has significantly improved her own oral health.

**Dr Atkins points out:**

**“This level of behavioural change is brought about by the patient learning what clean feels like and appreciating the value of oral hygiene for herself. The complex restoration treatment she had for her root canals will be successful in the long term, owing to the way she has transformed her oral health.”**

## Remember - The basics are easy.

- Brush your teeth twice a day with an adult toothpaste
- Make cleaning fun pick a favourite tune that lasts two minutes as your cleaning song!
- Don't rinse with water after brushing, this will cause the fluoride to be rinsed away
- Keep your sugar intake low and look out for the hidden sugars in things like dried fruit and smoothies
- Try fresh fruit, cheese and milk; rather than dried fruit, fizzy drinks and sugar based foods
- Keep anything sweet to meal times, reducing the frequency of sugar intake makes a massive difference

## There are also plenty of resources to help you.

Several recent models of Electric Toothbrushes combine with a Smartphone App, which acts as an aid to better teeth cleaning and oral healthcare.

But if these are too expensive, then Free Apps like **Brush DJ** are also designed to help young and old enjoy 'brush-time' and clean more effectively.

Another helpful App, which advises on the Sugar, Fat and Salt content of most groceries is **Food Smart**. It works by scanning the bar code on food packaging and quickly gives you a red / amber / green score to help you choose healthier options in the weekly shop.

Also, we have diet sheets on our website which you can use to track your food intake over three days. If you show it to your dentist, they can advise if there are particular items that are very bad for your teeth. For example, foods like dried fruit and smoothies are often promoted as being a healthy option, but they contain very high concentrations of sugars.

