



Ask the Dentist

Got a question for a dentist?

If you have a question you would like answered by a Ministry of Health-approved dentist, send it to us at enquiries.anjar@gmail.com. This issue, your questions are answered by Imperial Dental Specialist Centre's orthodontist, implantologist, oral surgeon, aesthetics and laser dentist, **Dato' Dr. How Kim Chuan** and **Dr. Stephanie Chong**.



GUMS AWAY

My grandmother has degenerating teeth and gum disease and is slowly losing most of her teeth. She is in dire need of dental replacement procedures, and since we live in Australia, we are planning to travel overseas for surgery. My family recently travelled to Malaysia and was very impressed with the professionalism and language proficiency of the medical personnel. Hence, we have decided to fly with my grandmother to Kuala Lumpur for her upcoming treatments. We need to know, if we go there, what type of treatment can we expect, how long treatments take and how much would the procedures cost.

Your grandmother most likely suffers from chronic periodontitis with progressive loss of teeth. We need to determine whether she has any underlying medical disease e.g. diabetes, bisphosphatase, poor nutrition, etc. In the case of diabetes, many kinds of bacteria (germs) thrive on sugars, including glucose, the sugar linked to diabetes. When diabetes is poorly controlled, high glucose levels in mouth fluids may help bacteria grow and initiate gum disease.

Medications such as Bisphosphonates which are used to treat osteoporosis, and which affects osteoblastic and osteoclastic (bone cells) activity can make the mouth vulnerable to infections such as gum disease. Stress lowers the ability of the immune system to fight off disease, which means bacterial infections may possibly beat the body's defence system. Poor diet or malnutrition can also lower the body's ability to fight periodontal infections, as well as negatively affecting the health of the gums.

We recommend a restorative and rehabilitation solution with periodontal disease control, extraction of hyper mobile and hopeless teeth and the restoration of function with dentures. We can also progress to a bridge if the teeth are stable, if not, progressive implant replacement may be considered.

HALAL MOUTHWASH

I am a 21 year-old Muslim woman who uses mouthwash after brushing. Although mouthwash does reduce bad breath and lessens chances of gingivitis, I am considering halting mouthwash use as it contains ethanol. Since alcohol is of course, non-halal, it's strictly against my religion to swallow even the tiniest bit. I would like to know if there are other forms of mouthwash out there, or any brand without any trace of alcohol.

Mouthwash does reduce the bacterial load in our mouth, hence helping to prevent gum problems. Mouthwash should never be used as a replacement to brushing. There are plenty of mouthwashes which do not have any alcohol content such as Colgate, OralB, Oradex and also many other locally manufactured brands. These products will specifically mention on the label that they are alcohol-free. Alcohol acts as a disinfectant when added into mouthwash, but for religious purposes you can switch to a non-alcohol mouthwash. Alcohol mouthwash also sometimes causes a temporary burning sensation to the oral cavity when used, so it might not be suitable for younger patients.

Most dental clinics also prescribe chlorhexidine mouthwash to their patients. While it has a bitter aftertaste and temporary alters your tastebuds for some patients, it is one of the most effective mouthwashes to reduce gingivitis and bad breath. However when regularly exposed to the teeth it can cause brown patches on the enamel because of a chemical reaction.

