



If you're a Brit, the answer might well be 'not as sexy as yours might be.' One thing other nations - & particularly the Americans - tease us about is the poor state of our teeth. Remember *Austin Powers* the groovy British secret agent frozen in time from the 1960s? One of the running gags in the movie is the terrible state of Austin's gnashers; all yellow & gunky. That, I'm afraid, is how they, with their whitened molars & Hollywood smiles, see us.

Under the theme 'Feed Your Smile', this year the British Dental Health Foundation will be looking at how people can make the best of their smile. **National Smile Month** kicks off on Sunday May 14th. **Dr Shameek Popat** a local dentist from Chorleywood says that "*One of the key aims of the campaign is to remind people of the importance of eating a healthy balanced diet including cutting down on the frequency of sugary foods and drinks. Everyone should be informed that vegetables, fruit, cheese and sugar free snacks are all safe snacking options. There's no doubt that a healthy smile is central to a person's overall attractiveness & can also have an impact on their general happiness*". Well, of course - how happy would you be if you couldn't smile? Dr Popat goes on "*National Smile Month aims to provide simple, practical oral health information to as many people as possible*".

So what can we do to clean up our act & put the makers of dental drills out of business? It seems the key thing is a bit of simple self-discipline. Dr Popat offers the ten tips shown opposite.

So, now we know. Stick to Dr Popat's advice, & next time you're in the States flash your big, beaming, British smile at everyone!

To support Nation Smile Month Dr Popat is offering all patients a free 'Brite Smile' consultation during May. (see opposite page for contact details)

How Sexy is Your Smile?

1. Give up smoking. There's a well-established link between smoking, gum disease & increased tooth loss. It will also stain your teeth.

2. Use a small-headed, soft to medium brush with round synthetic bristles that won't damage your gums. Change your brush whenever it goes out of shape (every 3 months) - so brushing is effective.

3. Certain foods can cause a specific kind of odour malodour called 'food breath'. Strong foods such as garlic, onions & curry are the worst culprits. Reduce your intake, & breath is likely to improve.

4. Use a toothpaste with added fluoride. Dental scientists agree that fluoride toothpaste has been the main cause in the decline of dental decay in the last 2 decades.

5. It is not always necessary to use a mouth rinse & some are of absolutely no benefit. Ask your dentist which are worth using or look for those containing triclosan, cetylpyridinium chloride & peroxide - all anti-plaque agents.

6. Chew sugar free gum. It stimulates saliva which helps clean away food remains & 'remineralises' the mouth after an acid attack.

7. Brushing too aggressively can lead to receding gums & other problems. Hold your brush at a 45° angle against the top of the tooth where it meets your gum & use 4 to 5 short horizontal movements per surface. Hold the brush like a pen so you don't apply too much pressure.

8. Reduce your intake of foods rich in refined sugars which can rot tooth enamel. Limit your intake of sugary, canned drinks to one a day.

9. Avoid sweet drinks before going to bed or during the night. The aggressive colourings & additives in cola & other drinks are so acidic that they actually demineralise the tooth overnight, eroding away the enamel on its surface.

10. Avoid too much acid in your diet. Citrus fruits, juices, pickled foods & sweetened sports drinks are the worst offenders. The frequency with which you consume these is crucial. For instance, if you sip or nibble throughout the day it is worse for your teeth than downing the whole lot in one go.