Clean teeth boosts fertility

By Nigel Carter

Brushing your teeth twice a day can boost a man’s sperm count, says the British Dental Health Foundation.

The oral health charity is advising men to brush their teeth regularly after a study found that infertile men are far more likely to suffer from gum disease.

A study of 56 men aged between 25 and 52 by the Bikur Holim Hospital, Jerusalem and the Hebrew University Hadassah School of Dental Medicine found that more than half the men with low sperm counts or no sperm at all suffered from developed gum disease. Gum disease has been linked to heart disease, diabetes and strokes and now infertility.

Chief executive of the British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF), Dr Nigel Carter said: “Brushing your teeth may not sound sexy, but this study shows its importance to male fertility.”

Factor in the benefits of good oral health for an attractive smile and to stop bad breath and it’s time men picked up their toothbrush.

The BDHF begins its annual National Smile Month campaign on 17 May, highlighting gum disease’s links to overall health under the slogan: ‘Look after yourself, brush for health’.

National Smile Month will promote the key routines for good oral hygiene.

More NHS dentistry for Cumbria

An additional 50,000 NHS places will be available at four new surgeries in Cumbria by the end of the year.

Hundreds of people have joined the waiting list for an NHS dentist in the area after news of the extra places.

West Cumbria already had 16,500 people on the waiting list before the announcement was made.

Purpose-built dental surgeries are being planned in Maryport and Workington under a £1.75m scheme.

The Workington practice will provide 10,000 places divided up between four dentists and the Maryport surgery will have 5,000 places and two dentists.

New surgeries will also provide 10,000 places in Whitehaven and 5,000 in Egremont. Eric Rooney, consultant in dental public health at NHS Cumbria, said: “With over 50,000 new places on the way, we can envisage that anyone who wants to see an NHS dentist in West Cumbria will soon be able to.”

He is calling for anyone wanting NHS dental care to register by completing a Dental Direct form available at GP surgeries or visiting the website at www.cumbria.nhs.uk/pct.

Patients who are on the waiting list will be informed in advance by letter about where and when the surgery near them is due to open.

Tooth decay admissions rise

Over 56,000 children are admitted to hospital with tooth decay every year and the figure is on the increase, according to the Conservatives.

Figures obtained by the Conservatives showed tooth decay is now the third most common reason children are admitted to hospital.

In a Parliamentary answer, health minister Ann Keen, revealed there were 56,550 admissions in 2006/07 among youngsters aged 10 and under.

However, figures for 2001/02 showed that tooth decay was not even one of the five most frequent main diagnoses.

The figures show there has been a 15 per cent rise in the incidence of hospital admissions relating to tooth decay in five years, the Conservatives said.

Shadow health minister Mike Penning, criticised the government for causing a ‘significant deterioration in the country’s dental health’.

He added: “In particular, Labour has completely failed to make any meaningful progress in terms of preventative dentistry, Regrettably, with a new contract that woefully neglects prevention, these problems will only get worse in the future. Labour need to stop dithering and take action to sort out the mess they have created of NHS dentistry.”

A good place to start would be to admit their mistakes and scrap the botched dental contract.

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In 2006/07, the two most common reasons for admission among children were acute upper respiratory infections, followed by premature birth and low birth-weight. Dental caries (tooth decay) was third, followed by viral infections and acute tonsillitis.

However a spokesman for the Department of Health called the allegations ‘misleading’ and said: ‘To claim we are doing nothing on preventative dentistry is simply wrong. All NHS dental practices now have access to evidenced-based practical guidance on effective preventative treatments.”