



# DENTAL UPDATE

A Bi-Annual Newsletter - No. 33

Summer 11

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## WHITENING AND SENSITIVITY

There are only two side effects from home whitening, using the little bleaching trays and gel.

The first is a nice one. The carbamide peroxide gel kills the bacteria in plaque, so gums that are red and infected due to not-so-good brushing and gingivitis often improve.

The second can be a worry. About a quarter of people who whiten their teeth report sensitivity to cold after a few days. The condition is not permanent but can be upsetting at the time.

Sensitivity is usually caused by a couple of factors. Brushing sideways damages the gums and exposes the porous roots, leaving the nerve or *pulp* underneath vulnerable. Likewise a diet that is too acidic will leach calcium from the enamel, rendering it weak and sensitive.

Normally the answer is to harden the teeth by applying a fluoride gel, such as Colgate Gel Kam (from the chemist) and milk based Tooth Mousse (from the clinic), both of which pump mineral back into the surface.

When the tenderness is set off by whitening gel, strengthening the tooth is less effective. The oxygen ions released by the bleach are too small to be retarded by thickened enamel and they still irritate the pulp. A smarter strategy is to actually slow the nerve transmission inside the tooth. Sensodyne does this using traces of potassium nitrate.

If there is a history of sensitivity, try this **before** the whitening - Wear the trays for a few nights, not with the gel inside, but a mix of Sensodyne and Tooth Mousse instead. This will prepare the teeth and there should be no discomfort.



## MOLLY AND MURPHY

Our dog Milo died some while back. She had been part of the family for almost twenty years and was always going to be a difficult act to follow. Nevertheless we could not remain dogless forever and six months ago we found a reputable breeder and bought one, then two, labradoodle puppies.

The older dog, Molly, is medium sized, gorgeous and very, very black. She looks a little like Walt Disney's Tramp (from *Lady and The Tramp*) except she is somewhat less photogenic and difficult to detect in failing light.

Murphy, on the other hand, is small, white and fluffy like a hyperactive ball of cotton wool. There is a passing resemblance to the dogs found in toy shops with batteries inside.

The two bonded instantly although they do play like a couple of Tassie Devils with ADD. Every day we are surprised there is no loss of blood, ears or assorted body parts. This explains the dog's nicknames - Molly The Marauder and Princess Pandemonium.

Being black and white, visitors ask if we are Collingwood supporters.

We usually set the dogs onto them.



Murphy playing hide and seek.

## WISDOM TEETH AND CROWDING

When front teeth become crowded in early adulthood the wisdom teeth usually get the blame. People realise there is rarely enough room for third molars and assume they push the others forward, buckling the front teeth.

Many dentists subscribe to the belief.

In fact the wisdom teeth have nothing to do with the movement. Incisors jam together because of *mesial drift* (drift to the middle.)

Nature assumes we are still back in the stone age, eating the hard and gritty diet of hunter gatherers. They would have worn down, not just the surfaces of their teeth, but the sides, narrowing the contact walls.

Rather than develop spaces between, nature pulls the teeth forward, virtually on elastic.

Of course our diet is totally different and modern teeth do not wear out in between, but the drifting still occurs and incisors can easily become crooked. This is why adolescents really should wear their retainers following orthodontic treatment.

The best reason to remove wisdom teeth is usually to simply avoid infections in the surrounding tissue.



Preventing infection is the best reason to remove wisdom teeth.

## NASA AND THE BALL POINT PEN

During the 1960s, when America competed with the Soviet Union to put men in space, one of the many problems NASA faced was developing a pen that would write in zero gravity.



It was only after spending many thousands of dollars on research that a functional ball point pen was finally designed.

In the meanwhile the Russians solved the problem in five minutes by using pencils.

In dentistry there is a sort of space race to develop better and more reliable ceramic restorations to repair fractured or decayed teeth.

Ceramic caps are usually made in a laboratory, traditionally fired in a furnace on a plaster model.

They are hard and good looking, but, sad to say, can fracture disastrously.

Ceramic's big weakness is that it does not flex and teeth **do** bend during grinding. To have strength they need to be thick.

Lately companies are developing space age machinery to instead mill the inlays directly from blocks of porcelain (like carving marble electronically) after the natural teeth are scanned by laser.

This is exciting technology, but the same old problems remain. Unless the caps are bulky they can break without warning.

To make matters worse ceramic will not go around bulges, so teeth need to be shaved with extra drilling. And they are more expensive than ever before.

It may not be the NASA approach but it is more sensible to drill the teeth less and leave healthy enamel. Chalky surfaces can be hardened using minerals, decay can be killed off chemically and the drilling can often avoid destroying the side walls of carious molars.

This style of dentistry is described in my ADA article [‘The Case For Minimal Intervention Dentistry’](#), available on our website. Would you believe if I claimed it was originally scribbled in pencil?

## DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME



Former Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood has brought out an autobiography and, of course, has been promoting it with interviews. He got onto the subject of how he and Keith Richards both had their teeth veneered with porcelain. Problem was, their caps kept coming off.

“A couple of these have fallen out. I got the Super Glue out. Luckily my wife had some in her cupboard. Keith did the same with Super Glue once. It is a good standby.”

Veneers should not fall off. The story suggests paying top dollar does not guarantee quality.

The Stones have always been known for living dangerously. If you do not mind week long benders, trashing hotel rooms and snorting various substances then have no qualms about sticking your faulty veneers back with Super Glue.

Otherwise see the dentist or, better still, get them done properly in the first place.

## THE WORKERS

Most people already know our daughter Marcelle's face from her picture in the window. What they do not know is that her performing career is really taking off.

She is a member of a children's group called The Workers, aimed at pre-schoolers. The group sing, dance and act and have to date recorded over twenty episodes for their new television series, now screening on regional Southern Cross Ten.



Children are always being asked what they want to be when they grow up. Answers are usually rather standard. Accordingly The Workers

have role models in Policeman Ben, Ballerina Beth, Builder John, Fireman Ross and, of course, our favourite – Dr. Marcie.

One can tell Marcelle is a doctor because she has a stethoscope, a white coat and a very reassuring smile. The fabulous singing voice is an added bonus. We always wanted a doctor in the family!

## LESS BAD

In September I had another article published in the ADA News Bulletin - *Cases of Assumed Identity* about changing the appearance of a front tooth to make it look like one already missing. The piece was informative but its big liability was the photographs – not quite up to previous standards.

In the weeks prior to printing the editor and I agonised over how to improve their look. Just before the deadline she phoned with some reassurance.

‘Don't worry’ she explained ‘I have been looking at an article going into the Dental Journal and his photos are much worse than yours!’

Obviously this made me feel a whole lot better.

You can be the judge as to whether the photography is really so bad.

Go on line to [www.dentalupdate.info](http://www.dentalupdate.info) and check out Published Articles or simply have a look at the selection in the waiting room.

Irrespective, it is always nice to know someone else does worse work than you.

