This month at ...

Your dental health and sleep

We are all experiencing extra levels of stress during the coronavirus pandemic. Difficult times like these highlight even more the importance of a good night's sleep to our health and wellbeing, including your oral health.

It is recommended that adults from their late 20s onwards have between seven and nine hours of sleep per night. Sleep has been proven to provide an anti-inflammatory response in the body, and even one night's interrupted sleep has been found to have a negative impact on our bodies and immune system.

As many of the common oral diseases (such as gum disease) are associated with inflammatory responses, it makes sense that there is a clear correlation between the hours of sleep we get and our risk of developing these conditions.

During your check-up at the practice, your dentist and hygienist/therapist are not only checking for cavities and gum disease – they are also making a note of any abnormalities in your teeth and mouth that might be clues to other health issues.

You're under lots of stress
Worn-down tooth enamel can be a sign that you are anxious and that you are relieving this stress by grinding your teeth when you sleep. We might ask you if you are feeling groggy during the day or suffer from a sore throat or a dry mouth, which are also signs of poor sleep.

Obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA)
OSA is a common condition in which the airways become restricted when lying down, resulting in interrupted or poor sleep. It is thought that around 1.5 million people in the UK suffer from this problem, and out of these, 40 per cent grind their teeth. This damages the teeth, causing them to wear down, chip or even become loose.

Tooth grinding may also be the cause of **morning headaches** – if you are experiencing these routinely, tell your dentist.

For those suffering from OSA, a night guard is often a good choice, as it will prevent teeth from being worn down due to grinding.

Tips for a good night's sleep

1 Regulate your body clock
Stick to a schedule of going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, including weekends.

2 Relax
Find a soothing routine activity to do each night before bed – like reading a book or meditating. Avoid TV and other artificial bright lights for at least an hour before turning in.

3 Avoid naps
Not taking a power nap during the day might just help you fall asleep faster at night and help you achieve a healthier sleep pattern.

4 Exercise
Not only will you feel better and sleep sounder but exercise has also been shown to have positive effects on our mental health.

5 Before bed
Avoid big meals, alcohol and caffeine. Alcohol is a sedative but it also affects the overall quality of sleep and can make you feel tired the next day.

Sweet dreams!

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