

VOGUE beauty



Wisdom & TEETH

*Christa D'Souza brushes up on
the latest in dental care*

how long did you spend brushing your teeth this morning? Are you sure it was a full two minutes? Would you say you were a rinser or a towel wiper, a walker or a dribbler? That is, can you simultaneously have your head in your wardrobe choosing what to wear, or will there be a trail of white blobs everywhere if you don't have your head in the sink? Do

you ever brush in the shower? Have you ever brushed lying down in bed? (It's one way to get an extra five minutes and it makes sense when you consider the position you are in for the hygienist.) Do you need privacy or are you like the Swedish couple in that marvellous film *Force Majeure*, lined up with the kids in front of the mirror in their jammies all furiously brushing and spitting away?

Front of book
fashion caption
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fashion caption

While we are at it, what state is your toothbrush in? Is it as pristine and presentable as the day it was bought, or is its handle caked in dried toothpaste and its head sporting splayed tufts? In other words, does it get as much prominence as any of your other beauty products or is it, like mine, on a decorative par with the lavatory brush? >

Of all the things we are obsessional about in Britain, our teeth, let's face it, are not historically among them. According to a report the British Dental Health Foundation published this summer for National Smile Month, one in three of us has never flossed, one in four has never used mouthwash and another one in four doesn't bother brushing twice a day (a third of men).

The good news is that we are a lot better at it than we were. According to latest figures at Mintel, Britain's oral-care spending rate is growing at a faster rate than it is in America, and in 2013 sales reached £1 billion. The state of our teeth, it could be argued, is a little like the state of our restaurants: they've come on in leaps since the Eighties. Look at the 24-hour smile-makeover clinics on the high street and the array of toothpaste brands at Boots. When Americans gloat, as they tend to, I enjoy pointing out that most of the joke teeth they sell in Hallowe'en costume shops are based on those of an Appalachian hillbilly.

Take my publisher friend Rebecca, "obsessed with my teeth/mouth as obvious ticket barrier/gateway to the rest of my/one's body", who emails: "Bit like a dirty hallway is a sign the rest of the house is going to be a mess. Visit the hygienist every three months. Wish I made as much effort with my hair." Take my mother, whose medieval

Mood-matching is very hot in the world of toothbrush design right now

dental care as a child (drilling by foot pedal and so forth) means that for as long as I can remember, she has spent at least 20 minutes every evening doing her teeth, what with all the interstitial brushing, flossing, tongue scraping, mouthwashing and so on. And while we are on the subject of mouthwashing, this craze for oil pulling – the ayurvedic practice of swilling with coconut oil – is it possible to conduct a conversation in Primrose Hill without it being mentioned? (Evangelists of the brand Cocowhite claim it cures gingivitis and hangovers and whitens the teeth almost as well as professional bleaching.)

On the other hand, are you sure you know how to brush correctly (the optimum angle is at 45 degrees to the teeth, like a flute)? Is it widely known

that infected gums have been linked to diabetes and dementia; that having plaque may be related not only to pre-term birth but also to erectile dysfunction? Or that the bacteria in our mouths are also in our colons, and that our bodies are cross-infecting constantly, which gives a whole new meaning to "poo breath", as we call it in our family. It makes sense, of course. Even if only on a subconscious level, a perfect smile, in terms of how attractive others perceive you to be, is more important than your figure, your skin, even your eyes – as studies conducted in 2014 by the British Dental Health Foundation confirm. Whether that translates to our behaviour at the sink is another matter. Certainly from where I'm sitting, and I work in a hugely self-aware industry, toothbrushing as

a beauty ritual is in no way on the same pedestal as cleansing and moisturising. But if we happily spend hundreds, thousands of pounds over the years on having our roots done, legs lasered, fingernails gelled and, yes, teeth professionally whitened (which adds nothing to their intrinsic health), does that make sense?

fundamentally, everything comes down to the brushing, so if it means glamorising the act, so much the better," says Susan Tanner, the spunky co-founder of Dawood & Tanner and creator of a new, slick line of "tooth cleansers". After my session with Jenny the hygienist – hurrah, nothing basically wrong, I've just got to floss a hell of a lot more, stop eating frozen grapes and kick the lemon-and-hot-water habit (heat makes the acidity of lemon even stronger) – my kids and I give them a bit of a test drive. There's one based on the taste of lemon curd, one based on Fox's Glacier Mints and a lime one Tanner hopes will remind users of a mojito. Don't know about that, but there's a kind of a Jelly Belly mix'n'match feel to them, and they look nice on my bathroom cabinet shelf...

"The reason behind creating them was that I wanted to move toothpaste away from basement healthcare and into first-floor beauty," explains Tanner, "because however much make-up a girl has got on, however much she has spent on her moisturiser, if she has scummy teeth – ughh, when there is blood on her apple core for example – she's not beautiful any more, is she?"

Perhaps Space NK needs to have more groovy dental products on its shelves. Maybe the folks at Apple should butt in? Anything to get the population brushing more diligently. There is definitely a trend in this direction. Look at the all-silicone Issa toothbrush put out by Foreo, which comes in a variety of bright colours, has a kind of Alessi vibe and sells for £149 on Net-a-Porter. Or what about Quip, a super-cool toothbrush service that enables you to get a new head delivered every three months. Then there's the interactive model brought out by Oral-B last year, the Bluetooth 4.0, which connects to your smartphone and allows your dentist remotely to peek at your brushing habits while customising your brush to your needs, setting your target session lengths, recording data of previous sessions and so forth. And if that seems a little excessive, why not check out the free



PHILIPS SONICARE DIAMOND CLEAN AMETHYST, £250

REINAST EVERLASTING TITANIUM TOOTHBRUSH, FROM £2,283, REINAST.COM

RADIUS ECO TOOTHBRUSH, £9.99, AT WHOLE FOODS

ORAL-B PRO 6500, £249

QUIP TOOTHBRUSH DELIVERY PACKAGE, FROM £8, GETQUIP.COM

FOREO ISSA SILICONE ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH, £149, AT LOOK FANTASTIC.COM

NHS-approved app Brush DJ, which selects music from your handheld device and plays it for exactly two minutes, the recommended time you should spend on the act (as opposed to the 56 seconds we typically think of as two minutes).

If you are into a manual toothbrush (and apparently 75 per cent of us are, including my Hollywood-toothed stepson who gets dizzy using an electric one), there are some very swanky ones, including the Binchotan Charcoal model from Japan, which comes with a holder made of stone, and the Koh-I-Noor, invented in Czechoslovakia in 1930, with its faux-tortoiseshell handle and badger-hair bristles – just what you can imagine Lady Mary using. Then there is always the titanium Reinast, yours, complete with detachable bristles, for £2,600.

The Apple/BMW Factor. That was definitely behind the Philips Sonicare DiamondClean, which comes with a rechargeable toothglass and case with inbuilt USB connection and retails for £250. Kim and Kanye, Kris Jenner and family are all proud owners. “Our main purpose was to design the most beautiful toothbrush in the world that would also deliver results,” says Raymond Wong, head of design at Philips Oral Healthcare. “It took us over eight months to get the handle right, to make it feel like ceramic and strip it of all superficial details. In a way,” he adds, “designing for Sonicare is a little like composing a haiku.”

Scroll forward and I am now 5,000 miles away from my bathroom, having just pitched up at the sprawling Bothell campus of Philips Healthcare in Seattle. After a coffee in the boardroom, we head to the design department, where different-coloured

DiamondClean toothbrushes have been alluringly laid out in a row. Perhaps it is the lighting, perhaps it is the fact they have never been used, but gosh, as rechargeables go, is the DiamondClean toothbrush slick. So slick, you could almost imagine it on a shelf in Coco de Mer. For the moment it comes in white, dusky pink, amethyst and black, but, according to Wong, an inky blue, inspired by the galactic universe, is a possibility. Personalising, moodmatching, is very

The Innovation Centre is the Willy Wonka-like heart of the operation

hot in the world of toothbrush design right now. Why, when and how we brush our teeth – these are topics that are minutely, lovingly obsessed over, here on the leafy Bothell campus. As the day progresses all sorts of fun facts emerge. In Japan, for example, where the three-times-a-day habit is so entrenched that it is perfectly acceptable to brush and floss at the office, while at school, children have little pegs upon which to hang their toothbrushes. Japanese people, by the way, hold their toothbrushes differently from us, like pencils or chopsticks.

Our next port of call is the Innovation Centre, the Willy Wonka-like heart of the operation, where the “toothbrush nerds”, as the engineers are affectionately called, test products before they go to market. One of them, Greg Goddard, a bespectacled young fellow whose father helped create the Space Shuttle, is showing us into the Life Lab, where the mechanical arm of Robbie the Robot – a real “live” robot in a cage – is brushing laboratory-grown human plaque off its “teeth”. As Goddard proudly claims, he has watched more than 3,000 hours of live toothbrushing, and there is nothing he couldn’t tell you about what you do when you are engaging in the act.

The dog-eat-dog world that the toothbrush industry has become

means that I can’t reveal everything I saw, but let’s just say the day when your microchipped toothbrush will be able to warn you if you have cancer or Alzheimer’s is not that far off.

Forty-eight hours later and I am back in London, standing in front of my bathroom mirror looking lovingly at my brand-new DiamondClean toothbrush (those nice folk at Philips gave me one), which takes pride of place between a new pot of Eve Lom Cleanser and my La Prairie Caviar Luxe eye cream. Counterintuitively I chose the pink one – it’s so patronising, pink – but this shade seems less Hello Kitty more Hauser & Wirth (if you’ve seen the super-cool vintage Sixties bathroom suite the gallerists have installed at Durslade Farmhouse in Bruton, Somerset, you’ll know what I mean). Another admission: I was given a Zoom whitening treatment that, for the moment, has me drinking my black venti americano through a straw and not going near red wine. Instead of being a tedious necessity, an afterthought to the more rewarding process of cleansing and moisturising, the twice (sometimes thrice) daily ritual, which now involves two types of dental floss, alcohol-free mouthwash and brushing for the full 120 seconds, has become something I almost look forward to – will even, for the hell of it, string out. Perhaps I should get the family colour-coordinated ones so we can all engage in the act together.

A “Jerry’s final thought” moment here, though. Could toothbrushing ever be elevated to the level of sexy? Will Jenny the hygienist ever be on a par with Teresa the facialist? Or Josh, the genius who colours my hair? Could designers get in on the act, with limited-edition handles by Stella, a pop-up toothbrush boutique in Liberty? At a birthday lunch last Sunday I had a discreet look round the table at everyone’s teeth. It may not be such a wacky idea. ■

FINE lines

Lip liners, the most under-rated product in the beauty arsenal, are set to make a return this autumn for two reasons: firstly, because the trend at shows such as Dolce & Gabbana and Marchesa was all about the precision-lined lip (or “counter-girl lips”, so-called because of the time, effort and beauty knowledge required to get them just right); and secondly, because Christian Louboutin Beauty is launching a game-changing lip liner. Being famed for his sky-high heels, he knows a thing or two about balance and precision, so these liners are shaped and weighted for perfect application.



CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN BEAUTY LIP DEFINER, £27, AT SELFRIDGES