

Secrets from your dental Superheroes



We're not blowing our own horn – and don't worry about showing up for your next dental appointment to find us dressed in Lycra skinsuits, with flowing capes and eye masks. What we're trying to get across is that your dentist and hygienist are here to give mouth enemies the heavyweight knockout punch.

The main villains – plaque and tartar



One of the reasons it's important to have **regular dental checkups** every six months is to keep a trained eye on the two main nasties that cause serious and, sometimes irreversible damage to your teeth and gums:

- **Plaque** – a clear, sticky layer of bacteria that forms on our teeth throughout the day. Yuk!
- **Tartar** – when plaque is not properly removed, it hardens into tartar. To make matters worse, it can't be removed by flossing or brushing.

Let's be honest, very few people brush their teeth carefully and long enough during their twice-a-day routine to completely remove these nasties (flossing won't fully do the trick either). Left to proliferate, plaque and tartar can cause nightmare issues such as tooth decay, receding gums, abscesses and a host of related issues, which are far from pleasant. If things are allowed to worsen even further, you can even end up losing teeth.

So, think of your dentist as bringing in the big guns to take out the villains who otherwise have nefarious ways of bypassing defences and causing chaos in the city. During your twice a year checkup, your dentist acts to combat plaque and tartar by giving your mouth, teeth and gums a thorough looking over. He or she will also check out your lifestyle habits in order to advise on damage limitation.

Think of your **dentist** and **hygienist** as part of the **Superhero pack**



Uber villain – mouth cancer

The second big gun in the fight against these villains is the hygienist. She is your **teeth cleaning superhero in London** with the powers to knock out tartar. A hygienist uses a special tool to scrape it away, and is also able to get into hard-to-reach places where plaque likes to hide out and plot destruction. If you suffer with gum disease, you should see these wonder workers more often than every six months. Your dentist will outline a tailored programme to suit your needs.

Nobody likes to think about the ‘C’ word, but it’s better to take preventative steps than have to face this nemesis when it’s taken root. While factors such as smoking, heavy alcohol use and poor diet contribute to the onset of mouth cancer, there’s a growing number of people with the condition who do not tick any ‘at risk’ boxes. So, in essence everyone needs to be checked for the lurking presence of this Uber Villain.

On a positive note, bear in mind that oral cancer can be successfully treated if caught early enough, and dentists are able to detect about 84% of oral cancer cases in its early stage.

While you’re having the usual checkup, your dentist will also perform oral cancer screening by looking for tell-tale signs such as discolouration, ulcers and lumps. If he or she suspects anything out of order, a tissue sample will be sent to a laboratory for **mouth cancer testing**.



Everyday villains – foods and drinks that raise hell

There are a few seemingly innocent foods and drinks that can cause major teeth damage. Here are the worst culprits:

- **Sticky** – apart from their damaging sugar content, sticky nibbles like raisins or certain sweets such as caramel tend to wedge into hard-to-reach places, plus they can easily cause a chipped tooth and damage fillings.
- **Hard** – chewing on hard things such as ice or boiled sweets frequently cause chipped teeth and enamel damage.
- **Starchy** – bread and potatoes sneak into the gaps between teeth.
- **Acidic** – foods such as citrus fruits, tomatoes and lemons cause havoc on the enamel covering which protects your teeth. Same goes for acidic drinks like fruit juices and white wine.
- **Carbonated** – soft drinks have outrageous amounts of sugar and are the leading cause of tooth decay in kids.
- **Rich in colour** – coffee, red wine, tomatoes and blueberries are all examples of foods and drinks that damage teeth by staining the enamel.

Another area to watch out for is anything that causes your mouth to become dry – this is because saliva is nature’s primary way of fending off plaque and other bacteria, so without it the nasties have a field day. Examples of common culprits include alcohol and a number of medicines. If you’re on medication that dries out your mouth, tell your dentist so he or she can go into combat mode by prescribing a fluoride product and care routine that gives you added dental protection.

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We've looked at the bad guys that wreak havoc with your teeth and gums, now let's look at the good guys who help keep your smile healthy. Or to put it another way, these are some of the tricks that superheroes use to knock out those pesky oral villains:

- Fibre – foods that are rich in fibre help to remove plaque and get your healthy saliva flowing.
- Dairy – some dairy products like (sugar-free) yoghurt are high on the alkaline rating, which counter-effects the damage caused by eating or drinking acidic products. What's more, cheese encourages saliva production, while many dairy products are high in calcium which strengthens your teeth with healthy minerals.
- Tea – black or green tea contains a chemical called polyphenols that combats plaque bacteria.

To give your teeth and gums even more of a helping hand, here are some extra tips:

- Go for anything that contains fluoride – found in most toothpastes and mouthwashes, fluoride acts to strengthen teeth, preventing cavities and nerve sensitivity.
- Chew sugar-free gum – it generates saliva and helps remove food that gets stuck in your teeth throughout the day.
- Try to eat your sugary treats with meals – there is more saliva production to counteract the damage that sugar causes to your teeth. If you absolutely must have that bar or chocolate mid-morning or afternoon, be sure to rinse your mouth with water afterwards.

Conclusion

The reason why we're one of the most highly recommended practices in London for our broad range of dental and hygienist services is because we don't view what we do as a job – at Bow Lane Dental we strive to be the superheroes who give mouth villains the heavy-weight knockout punch. We work tirelessly to stamp out oral issues before they grow into Godzilla-sized problems, but if trouble really kicks off we have the expertise and cutting-edge technology to beat the monster and save the day.

Let's hope it doesn't come to an epic battle though – by booking in for regular check ups and availing yourself of our gentle yet thorough dental cleaning service, you'll go a long way in ensuring your smile stays healthy. Also keep our overview of the best and worst foods for teeth in mind, as this is an easy way to give your teeth a helping hand.

To learn more about the topics we've covered in this guide, see the dedicated sections from our blog: [Dental Hygiene](#), [Oral Hygiene](#), [Sugar and Diet](#), [Tooth Decay](#), [Gum Disease](#), [Mouth Cancer](#).