Poor dental habits increase swine flu risk

Bad dental hygiene could possibly increase the risk of swine flu as today’s National Dental Survey reveals the UK’s failure to heed infection control advice.

Dreadful dental habits are helping spread germs – as 40 per cent of the UK population admit to picking their teeth with fingernails.

Picking teeth with everyday items such as earrings, credit cards, paperclips, paper and even screwdrivers are some of the disturbing habits flying in the face of infection-busting advice.

The survey was conducted by the British Dental Health Foundation as part of National Smile Month (May 17th – June 16th).

Picking teeth with fingernails risks spreading germs from surfaces touched and dirty hands straight to the mouth and onwards to the rest of the body.

Foundation chief executive Dr Nigel Carter said: “Hygiene warnings have been made clear ever since the swine flu outbreak, and it is worrying that these habits have been revealed as the numbers affected by flu steadily rises. Personal hygiene should be a top priority for all.”

Results highlighted the UK’s lack of awareness of the importance of oral health, with research linking gum disease to heart disease, diabetes, strokes, premature births, low birthweight babies and, in recent early studies, infertility.

From news reports

New research has shown that human teeth can lose some enamel hardness following the application of teeth whitening products used in the home. According to lead author Shereen Azer, Assistant Professor of Restorative and Prosthetic Dentistry at Ohio State University in the US, the average loss of enamel ranged from 1.2 to 2 nanometres on the treated teeth. Tooth bleaching products contain solutions of varying strengths of either hydrogen peroxide or carbamide peroxide, which produce free radicals that attack pigment.

Enamel is the hardest structure in the human body. Tooth whitening products may weaken this natural barrier. (DTI/Photo bg_knight)

Enamel weakened by teeth whitening

US study has found that bleaching teeth at home has side effects

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Diabetes and oral health

According to World Health Organization, Diabetes is the second highest prevalence in the world. UAE stands fifth in this category as 25% of the UAE population that is one in four is affected by either diabetes type 1 or diabetes type 2 for which UAE government are spending annually Dh24m on diabetic treatment according to Gulf news report.

Dental students, Rand Tariq Alyouzbaki, Hadeel Abu Ghazzi, Yasmeen El jarred, Abdullah Jamal, of University of Sharjah under the supervision of Dr. Kauser Fakhruddin and Dr. Sausan AlKawas, did a small survey to assess the awareness level of 236 young educated adolescents and adults enrolled in different programs (Engineering, Media, Law and Sharia) at University of Sharjah, studying in year 1 through year 5. Interestingly, 2.6% of this study population reported that they have either diabetes type 1 or 2 and over 60% of the study participants reported that either their parents or their siblings or both have diagnosed diabetes.

One of the risk factors for type 2 diabetes is having a close relative (parent or sibling) who has type either type 1 or 2 diabetes. It is pity to note that, among those with a family history of diabetes, over 50% reported that they don’t think routine screening for diabetes is important and shows their lack of information related to diabetic symptoms like (increase in thirst, frequent urination especially at night, loss of appetite, high blood glucose level) and its associated systemic affects on the heart, nerve, vision, limbs and kidneys.

According to Dr. Kausar, this survey demonstrates that 85% of participants who are at risk because of their family history of diabetes are mostly ignorant about the diabetes and its associated oral health affects.

Diabetes can harm eyes, nerves, kidneys, heart and other important systems in the body. Did you know it can also cause problems in your mouth? Diabetics are more susceptible to contracting infections. People with diabetes especially uncontrolled type 1 or type 2 diabetics and undiagnosed diabetes are at a higher risk for gum disease and other dental problems.

When a body is suffering from diabetes, the structure of the blood vessels is altered. This may affect the efficiency the blood flow, and in turn may weaken the bone and the gums, leaving them more prone to infections. Furthermore, if diabetes is not strictly managed, there may be higher than usual levels of glucose in the mouth fluids. This will encourage the growth of gum disease-causing bacteria.

“Periodontal or gum disease is the main cause of tooth loss in diabetic patients! Diabetes may weaken body’s germ-fighting abilities and high blood glucose levels can make gum disease worse. In its early stages, gum disease is called gingivitis in which gums may be red, swollen tender and bleed a little while brushing or flossing, but if not treated, over period of time the gum infection can lead to the breakdown not only of your gum but also bone and other tissues that are holding your teeth in place.

The severe form of gum disease is known as periodontitis. Periodontal diseases are actually infections of the gum and bone that hold the teeth in place. In advanced stages, they lead to painful chewing problems and even tooth loss.

At the same time, recent researches suggested that gum disease or periodontal disease can make blood glucose levels harder to control.

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