



Dr Grant McAree

# Ask Dr. Grant



DR GRANT IS ONE OF THE LEADING COSMETIC DENTISTS IN THE SOUTH WEST AND HAS TREATED PATIENTS FROM ACROSS THE REGION AND BEYOND. HE HAS BEEN GRANTED PRACTISING PRIVILEGES AT NUFFIELD HOSPITAL, EXETER

## Teeth and ageing – what’s the story?

### What are we talking about?

The various ways in which teeth and gums can be affected by the natural ageing process as well as by not being looked after properly ... and what can be done to help. So, things like discolouration, receding gums, loss of enamel and tooth decay or loss.

### Will I definitely lose my teeth?

No. With the right home care routine plus regular visits to your dentist and hygienist, it’s possible to keep your teeth for life. Gum disease and tooth decay can be prevented whatever your age. Dentures are not an inevitability of old age.

### What can I expect as I get older?

Teeth tend to become discoloured over time, either as part of the natural ageing process or as a result of staining from things like tea, coffee, red wine and smoking. Gums tend to recede or shrink back as we get older but this can be made worse by brushing too hard over the years, which simply wears away gums. The constant build-up of plaque or tartar can also cause gums to recede and, if left untreated, result in gum disease which can affect the bone supporting the tooth roots, so teeth gradually become loose.

### Anything else?

From 60 onwards, the effects of gum disease are most obvious, so it’s vital to try to prevent damage before then. Worryingly,

after the age of 50 around 80 per cent of us will have receding gums due to gum disease. Gum recession causes the tooth root to be exposed, increasing the risk of both decay and sensitivity. Although enamel is the hardest substance in the human body, it can still be worn away, either through everyday biting and chewing, repeatedly brushing too hard or repeated exposure to acids in food and drinks, including fruit juice, wine and fizzy drinks.

### How can I protect my teeth?

Follow a good oral hygiene routine to help prevent both decay and gum disease, by removing plaque, and staining. Brush for two minutes twice a day, preferably with an electric brush – electric brushes have been shown to clean more effectively than manual brushes meaning you’re less likely to brush too hard and wear away the enamel or your gums. It’s just as important to clean between teeth once a day, with interdental brushes or floss, to help stop plaque build-

up and staining. Using ‘tartar control’ or ‘total care’ toothpastes can also help.

### What else can I do to help?

Go for regular check-ups and hygiene appointments. Regular brushing alone won’t remove all plaque deposits, so have a scale and polish at least once a year. Also, be more aware of not only sugar but also acids in food and drinks. Stay well: research suggests people who stay generally fit and healthy are 40 per cent less likely to develop gum infections that could lead to gum disease.

### How can you help as a dentist?

Besides detecting problems early on, thanks to regular check-ups we can give tips on all aspects of oral hygiene. Prevention is indeed better than cure. In terms of restorative procedures, whitening can revitalise the natural look of teeth, veneers and crowns can restore the shape and function of teeth, surgery can correct excessive tooth recession and implants can permanently replace missing or lost teeth. There’s no treatment for loss of enamel: one it’s gone, it’s gone for good. **ML**

**“WHEN YOUR FRIENDS BEGIN TO FLATTER YOU ON HOW YOUNG YOU LOOK, IT’S A SURE SIGN YOU’RE GETTING OLD”  
– MARK TWAIN**

**Dr Grant McAree BDS BSc (Hons)  
Cosmetic Dentist  
The Whyte House  
89 Fore Street  
Topsham EX3 0HQ  
Tel: 01392 877494  
[www.thewhytehouse.com](http://www.thewhytehouse.com)  
GDC No 73367**