

Oral health – embracing the digital world



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Prevention – or oral health promotion – is the cornerstone of all dentistry. Today's dental practice is focused on the health and wellbeing of its patients, particularly with the wealth of evidence-based studies highlighting the systemic links to other inflammatory disease that stretch beyond the oral cavity.

Public Health England's Delivering better oral health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention (third edition 22 March 2017) placed oral health education firmly at the heart of general practice with guidance for GPs and their teams highlighting risks, advice and actions needed to prevent disease.

Oral health education is no longer confined to the surgery. 21st century care requires practices to break traditional communication channels and embrace the digital world – these days online is very often where your potential patients will first experience your business.

In the UK, 85% of the population are using smartphones, with 78% using laptops, which requires practices to have a robust social media strategy as well as an engaging and easy-to-navigate practice website if they are to reach patients with key messages.

With a profession facing a growing epidemic of child tooth decay and associated diseases, practices need to up their game to preserve the health of the nation.

- 1. Don't allow your practice website to lie dormant.** A successful website (i.e. one that gets seen and has value) relies on lots of activity, so update blogs regularly with engaging and relevant copy that offers simple, actionable advice. Give patients a reason to trust you by adding value to their dental experience, which may even be before they set foot inside your door.
- 2. Amplify your website with social media posts.** Direct potential patients to your URL with posts and tweets highlighting the key oral health advice within your website – whether this is introducing your hygienist and explaining their role in the maintenance of a healthy smile or a blog about teeth and gum care. Incentivise new patients to book an appointment with your team or existing ones to return.
- 3. Have a trusted profile online.** Stay ahead of the game by being a thought leader. Keep abreast of current thinking and share the news. Engage with social media accounts that campaign about health issues.

Remain authentic, get involved and nurture your patients' oral health – online as well as off.