



No. 19 – Your Dental Questions

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Title: **Your Dental Questions Answered**

Questions answered by **Dr E.S. Davenport**

Q My 12 year old son has ITP and as his gums bleed when he brushes his teeth I wonder whether this will cause him to lose his teeth in the future. The dentist does not seem able to answer my question and certainly does not want to clean any tartar from his teeth because of the bleeding.

A *It is not unusual for 12 year olds to have bleeding gums even without ITP. This is generally associated with accumulation of dental plaque and subsequent bleeding of inflamed gums. However, with ITP this is probably exaggerated but should not lead to losing teeth in the future providing an effort is made to maintain good oral hygiene.*

General dental prophylaxis, removal of soft deposits from the tooth surface should not cause bleeding and neither should scaling supra gingival (above gum level) calculus from the tooth surface. The dentist should be able to remove such deposits and not cause untoward bleeding.

Q I read that antibiotics can discolour teeth. Is this true of all antibiotics? As I am taking them daily following a splenectomy is there anything I can do to stop my teeth looking awful in ten years time?

A *Antibiotics do not discolour teeth unless they are from the tetracycline family. Discolouration will only occur if the antibiotic is prescribed and taken during the development (calcification) stage of the crowns of the teeth, that is up to eight or nine years of age. Tetracycline is incorporated into the enamel structure and results in yellow or blue black discolouration.*

Q My daughter was due to have a brace to straighten her teeth, but as she now has ITP I am concerned that it may exacerbate her problems with bleeding gums and mouth ulcers. Would it be best to wait and hope the ITP clears up first.

Having a brace fitted to teeth should not exacerbate ITP and result in bleeding gums providing teeth are kept clean and there is a meticulous tooth brushing regime. New braces can be difficult to keep clean and therefore it might be better to wait for six months to see if the ITP clears up.

Q Is it safe for the ITP sufferer to have teeth removed at the dentist, or must one always go to hospital?

A *It is always best for an ITP sufferer to inform the dentist that he/she has been diagnosed with the condition. A dentist should not take teeth out unless they have discussed the situation with the haematologist and been advised of the precautions that should be taken including possible medication to assist in the clotting process. However, if there is any doubt then it is always best for the individual to be referred to the nearest oral surgeon for advice and treatment.*