

## **FOOTBALL STAR SETS WISE EXAMPLE WITH DENTAL CARE**

The UK's leading oral health charity has backed Arsenal star Robin van Persie's decision to seek dental work as he bids to overcome fitness problems.

The striker told newspapers this week that can upcoming wisdom tooth extraction had been booked in a bid to ease a muscle injury problem.

The Gunners player follows fellow Premiership star and England player Steven Gerrard into the dentists' chair. The Liverpool captain had his wisdom teeth removed when injuries forced him to miss games early in his career.

Chelsea winger Florent Malouda also visited the dentist for wisdom tooth extraction before an upturn in form and fortune ended with an FA Cup winner's medal this week. The British Dental Health Foundation has emphasised the importance of dental treatment during National Smile Month (May 17<sup>th</sup> to June 16<sup>th</sup>). Research has linked oral health to our overall health, including potential links to the nervous system through impacted wisdom teeth.

Foundation chief executive Dr Nigel Carter BDS LDS (RCS) said: "Though in most cases the removal of wisdom teeth is no longer thought necessary, with prevailing views pointing to risks of removal rather than benefits of extractions, this treatment highlights the importance of dental work in relation to our overall health.

"Though most of us are not highly paid athletes likely to take such measures, oral health has also been linked to potential health risks which we all want to minimise.

"Past research has made the possible link between gum disease and heart disease, strokes, diabetes, arthritis and premature births so following footballers into the dental practice is a key part of our healthcare routine."

The Foundation was founded in 1971, with National Smile Month promoting good oral healthcare each summer since 1975.

The campaign promotes three key messages to look after your oral health:

- Brush your teeth twice daily with fluoride toothpaste
- Cut down on the frequency you take sugary snacks or drinks
- Visit your dentist regularly, as often as the dentist recommends.

More information is available at [www.nationalsmilemonth.org](http://www.nationalsmilemonth.org), while the public can call the National Dental Helpline on 0845 063 1188, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

## **ENDS**

### **Editor's notes**

For further information please contact the Foundation's Press Office on 0870 770 4014 or by emailing [pr@dentalhealth.org](mailto:pr@dentalhealth.org)

Websites: [www.dentalhealth.org](http://www.dentalhealth.org) / [www.nationalsmilemonth.org](http://www.nationalsmilemonth.org)

Members of the public can contact the National Dental Helpline for free and impartial expert advice on 0845 063 1188 Monday to Friday.

The British Dental Health Foundation is an independent charity formed in 1971 that along with its global arm, the International Dental Health Foundation, is dedicated to improving oral health. The Foundation promotes three key messages:

- Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Cut down how often you have sugary foods and drinks
- Visit the dentist regularly, as often as they recommend

#### **NATIONAL SMILE MONTH 2009 – MAY 17 TO JUNE 16**

Looking at systemic links between oral health and overall health. Pre-2009 research:

#### **HEART**

- December 2008 – Italian/UK study in FASEB Journal reveals good oral healthcare and treatment for gum disease can prevent the bacteria that cause thickening of the arteries. (Piconi, Trabattoni et al, FASEB Journal Dec 08)
- September 2008 - scientists present the Society of General Microbiology's autumn meeting with two new studies linking between gum disease and heart disease.
  - A University of Bristol-led presentation shows how the 700 million oral bacteria present a clear risk, with harmful bacteria bonding to protect against the immune system or antibiotics, and increasing chances of heart disease even in the case of fit healthy people (Jenkinson, Kerrigan et al – Uni Bristol/RCS Dublin Sep 08)
  - A study presented by University of Otago's Professor Greg Seymour finds that oral bacteria causes atherosclerosis, or 'furring' of the arteries, as oral bacteria's similarity to proteins which cause arteries to fur confuses the immune system.
- Jan 2006 - PERICAR trial, a collaboration between Australia's Sydney Dental Hospital and Royal North Shore Hospital and Norway's University of Oslo. Strong evidence that treating gum disease can reduce the risk of a heart attack or stroke. Inflammation in the mouth has a measurable effect in the bloodstream and the rest of the body. Once the gum infection was eradicated the risk of heart attacks and future blood clots were reduced. (Taylor, Tofler et al; Journal of Dental Research, January 2006)

#### **DIABETES**

- November 2008 – Columbia University (USA) publishes evidence of links from periodontal disease to type 2 diabetes. Of 9,000 participants in the study 800 developed diabetes. Those with high levels of periodontal disease were twice as likely to develop diabetes. (Demmer, Desvarieux et al, Diabetes Care)
- July 2007 - The Department of Periodontology at the University of Copenhagen (Denmark) finds link between gum disease and pre-diabetes, often a precursor to type-2 diabetes. Dr. Carla Pontes Andersen said: "The gum inflammation seen in periodontitis can allow bacteria and inflammatory substances from the dental structures to enter the bloodstream. These processes seem to affect blood sugar control." (Pontes Anderson, Flyvbjerg et al; Journal of Periodontology)

#### **PREMATURE BIRTHS**

- December 2008 – researchers in Finland question 328 women on oral health and pregnancy, those who needed urgent dental treatment, suggesting poor oral health, were 2.5 times more likely to miscarry. (Heimonen et al, Blackwell Publishing)
- July 2007 - Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Chile finds link between gum disease and premature births. One in three women at risk of premature labour presented with gum disease bacteria in their amniotic fluid, as well as their mouth.
  - Amniotic fluid surrounds an unborn baby. Scientists believe that any disruption to this fluid could pose a danger to both mother and baby, especially as hormone changes in pregnant women expose a greater risk of gum disease. (Leon, Silva et al; Journal of Periodontology)

#### **STROKES**

June 2006 - University of California scientists found that gum disease may contribute to clogged carotid arteries leading to an increased risk of a stroke. Blocked carotid arteries were much more common in people

who had gum disease. (Chung, Friedlander et al, General Session & Exhibition of the International Association for Dental Research)