

your HEALTH

GET IN TOUCH:
Have you struggled with a difficult health problem? We want to tell your story. Contact our health correspondent Cathy Buss on 0116 222 4261, email catherinebuss@leicestermercury.co.uk

Over the years we have all heard of the harmful effects that alcohol can have on our bodies. But many of us are still unaware of the lasting damage it can have on oral health and teeth. In this week's article, **DR ADAM PATEL** reveals the truth about drinking

WHAT are the potential harmful effects of alcohol on oral health?

Alcohol is second only to smoking in the list of risk factors for oral cancer. As further research is being carried out into its effects, the role of alcohol is becoming more apparent. Cancer Research UK revealed that 37 per cent of mouth and pharyngeal cancers in men and 17 per cent in women were directly linked to alcohol in 2010. People who smoke and drink have a compounding effect in that they have an even higher risk of developing an oral cancer.

Which age groups are more prone to developing alcohol related oral cancer?

There is no specific discriminatory age group. Recent statistics have shown that oral cancers are becoming increasingly more prevalent in younger people, and this has shown a direct correlation with increased alcohol consumption in recent years.

What are the harmful effects of alcohol on teeth and gums?

Many alcoholic drinks – especially those aimed at younger people and women – are high in sugars, which can directly affect dental decay rates. All alcoholic drinks contain acid, which over time can have a devastating effect on teeth by causing them to wear down.

The detrimental effect is twofold as the acid consumed will gradually wear the enamel on the surfaces of your teeth and the effect is compounded in some cases by acid-reflux or vomiting as a direct result of drinking alcohol in excess. In addition, excessive alcohol consumption hinders the body's natural ability to heal, so following dental treatment or oral surgery, the recovery process will usually



Hard to swallow... links between oral cancer and booze

take longer and your body may not be able to heal completely.

I would like help and assistance to try to stop drinking. Where do I start?
As your first step I would advise you to visit your GP, contact a support group, or set a date in the near future to stop. While some people can stop drinking on their own, others need medical help to

manage the physical process of withdrawal. If you think you have an addiction to alcohol, talk to your GP about whether you need to withdraw from alcohol under medical supervision. Your GP can provide you with the right medicine.

Are there any guidelines on how to measure alcohol consumption?
With such a vast array of

drinks and glass sizes available including shots, pint glasses and bottles, it is understandably easy to get confused about how many units are in your drink. Units are a simple way of expressing the quantity of pure alcohol within a drink. One unit equals 10ml or 8g of pure alcohol, which is about the amount of alcohol the average adult can process in an hour.

What are the recommended alcohol consumption levels for both men and women?
The NHS has recommended that men should not regularly drink more than four units per day, while women should avoid regularly drinking more than three units of alcohol per day. Further recommendations include avoiding alcohol for a minimum of 48 hours following a heavy drinking session.

It is imperative to understand that these are only "guidelines" and that any amount of sustained alcohol consumption is likely to be destructive to both oral and general health in the long term.

I find it difficult to keep count of the number of units I have consumed. Is there an easy way to calculate this?

Excessive alcohol consumption hinders the body's natural ability to heal

Dr Adam Patel

Yes. I have the perfect tool for this. The alcohol unit calculator allows you to easily input the drinks that you have had and it can summarise your total unit consumption within seconds to allow you to easily keep track. This is available through the education section on my website at: www.dental-excellenceuk.com/education/guidelines-on-alcohol-consumption

ASK THE EXPERT

THE Leicester Mercury has teamed up with Leicestershire dentist Dr Adam Patel (pictured) to help readers with any dental and oral health problems they might have. People are invited to send in any questions and Dr Patel will answer a selection of them through a regular column on this page, in the Mercury's Monday Woman section.

Dr Patel said: "I hope I will be able to help people with information and advice, which they can put into practice."

"My experience in seeing patients is that there is quite a lack of dental and oral health information and education."

"Your mouth is the start of your digestive system and people often don't realise there is a distinct link between oral and general health."

"It can also have a big impact on a person's psychological and social wellbeing. Bad oral health is very visible and can impact on aspects of life, from a person's personal life to getting a job."

Dr Patel, who was educated at the City of Leicester School and Sixth Form College, said: "I hope I will be able to help readers with the information I can provide."

Dr Patel's replies should only be used as a reference – he is not a replacement for your own dentist.

If you have a query you would like to raise, please summarise it in about 200 words and e-mail it to the address below. Put "health questions" in the subject line.

Alternatively, send your 200-word summary to Cathy Buss, Health Questions, Leicester Mercury, St George Street, Leicester, LE1 9FQ.

Please note, an edited version of the information you send us might appear on this page.

Please include a contact name and phone number in case we have any queries about your submission.

These details will not be published.

Dr Patel will not be able to send personal responses to letters.

catherinebuss@leicester.co.uk



PRESTIGIOUS AWARD: Dr Adam Patel receiving his trophy

Adam wins title of region's young dentist of year

THE Leicester Mercury dentist Dr Adam Patel has won the prestigious title of Young Dentist of the Year for the Midlands.

He won the honour at the annual Dentistry Awards hosted by FMC – the dental profession's main publishing house.

The aim of the awards is to recognise the most outstanding individuals and teams at the top of their profession.

To win the award, Dr Patel had to demonstrate top clinical skills, continuously achieving academic accolades over the past 11 years and gaining several post-graduate qualifications.

One of these was being one of the youngest Masters in the field of implantology.

Dr Patel has also been awarded certifications in aesthetic and restorative dentistry, as well as oral surgery.

In addition, he regularly publishes articles and academic research within dental and implant journals and provides a service to his community by regularly contributing within the Leicester Mercury, with the aim of enhancing the regional communities' oral health.

Dr Patel said: "It is an absolute honour and a privilege to have won this award with so many high-calibre clinicians competing from

various cities across the Midlands.

"I have spent copious amounts of time and effort over the past 11 years travelling across the world seeking knowledge with the ultimate aim of developing myself into a world-class clinician, to enable me to apply serve my community and my patients within Leicestershire and nationwide."

"I hope this will inspire others from a similar background to realise their dreams

Dr Adam Patel

"I came from very humble beginnings.

"It is through sheer hard work and determination. My parents provided me with a platform upon which I grasped every opportunity to exceed and excel above and beyond the norm.

"Receiving this accolade is vindication for what hard work, self-belief and motivation can help you achieve.

"I hope this will inspire others from a similar background to myself to realise their dreams."