



Carla Lejarraga | Smile Dental

your dental hygienist...

More than an extra pair of arms, eyes and ears for your dentist.

In the modern dental practice, dental hygienists are part of the furniture. But, as little as 10 years ago, our practice had to recruit my mentor, Laurelyn Higgins, from Canada because there weren't enough graduates in Australia. Today, most states offer university courses in dental hygiene. I was among the first to graduate from the University of Queensland's Bachelor of Applied Science (Oral Health) in 2000.

Nowadays, the role of the dental hygienist is highly specialised and constantly evolving in line with rapid developments in oral health care. Today, there's much more to dental hygiene than just a scale and clean. Dental hygienists are university-educated oral health professionals who work in tandem with your dentist. They thoroughly monitor and maintain your oral health, show you how to do the same at home, and provide valuable feedback and support for your dentist.

But it's not just about your oral health. Your mouth is a window to your body and a mirror of your general health. Poor oral health can cause problems or aggravate existing conditions, far beyond the teeth and gums. Many other health problems also show early telltale signs in your mouth.

Fortunately, most people see their dental hygienist every six months. In many cases, this is more often than they see their general practitioner.

Material supplied by Carla Lejarraga, leader of the hygiene department at Smile Dental. www.smiledental.com.au



Here are some of the many services your dental hygienist can offer you...

- Detecting links between dental health and general health
- Prevention of tooth decay and bad breath
- Stain removal
- Whitening or lightening your smile
- Detecting and treating gum disease before it's too late
- Showing you how to maintain your oral health between visits
- Screening for oral cancer
- Identifying signs of conditions ranging from reflux to diabetes
- Testing saliva function and acidity
- Managing your oral health during pregnancy or illness
- Advising on healthy nutrition
- Helping you stop smoking

Your dental hygienist, together with your dentist, will help keep you smiling, healthy and looking fabulous.

P.S. By the way, our new website is up. You'll find detailed info on everything from the latest dental procedures to caring for your smile at home. You can even read our past DUO columns.

Smile conducts regular professional development workshops for dental practices seeking to develop the roles of their hygienists. The workshops bring together dental care practitioners from across the country for a productive weekend in Townsville.