

A close-up photograph of a woman's face. She has her eyes closed and a slight smile. Her lips are coated in a vibrant red lipstick. Her hand is visible on the left side of the frame, with her index finger resting near her eye. The skin is a warm, natural tone. The text "HOW MILLENNIAL IS YOUR" is printed in white, bold, uppercase letters across the upper portion of her forehead.

HOW MILLENNIAL IS YOUR

MOOUTH?



Probiotic mouthwashes, 'fashion' toothpastes and flavoured floss... With the rise of Zoom, perhaps it's no surprise that the oral beauty market is having a moment

WORDS BECCI VALLIS

ONLY ONE IN FOUR of us feels confident about our smile, according to recent research. And, once this latest lockdown lifts, 47% of us will be investing in teeth treatments like whitening and alignment'. Zoom calls and a constant analysis of our appearance has played a part in piquing our interest. 'People have started to appreciate that the mouth is dynamic and watching our smiles in motion on a screen means some of us want our teeth treated – I've never been busier,' admits cosmetic dentist Dr Rhona Eskander.

Worth £2.2 billion, the UK's dentistry industry is booming, but it's not just the mirror image of our mouths that's driving demand – the heightened focus on self-care is extending to our teeth-brushing routine. Alexia Inge, founder of Cult Beauty, has dubbed the wider movement as 'new-gen hygiene'. 'We're going back to basics and seeing a re-emergence of essentials. There's been a focus on hand washing and now it's oral care, especially because good oral hygiene is one of the first steps to immunity,' she says. Here's what's in store for your pearly whites from here on in...

HEALTHY MOUTH. HEALTHY BODY

You may be familiar with the skin and gut microbiome, but what about the oral microbiome? The greatest defence system we have – because our mouths are the gateway to the rest of our body – if it's out of kilter, we're susceptible to all sorts of inflammation and infection. 'Unlike our gut or skin, it's constantly under attack – every time you breathe, smile, talk, drink, change your diet – these are all things that will alter the oral microbiome,' explains dentist Dr Victoria Sampson. 'I can often diagnose things like vitamin deficiencies and gastro-

intestinal diseases, such as Crohn's or colitis, just by looking in someone's mouth.'

As with the other microbiomes, the key is to keep the bacteria in your mouth in equilibrium, which is where prebiotic and probiotic products can help. With Mintel revealing that 24% of people are already interested in using oral care products with probiotics, we can expect to see more on the market soon but, so far, Zendium is one of the first. Using enzymes and proteins naturally found in saliva to balance the bacteria, its toothpaste and mouthwash deliver a prebiotic effect.

Far more than a mere marketing move, there's method in these new launches. The lining of your mouth is 50 times more absorbent than your skin, which means that whatever you put in it is immediately filtered into your bloodstream. No wonder, then, that besides probiotics, there are whisperings of toothpastes formulated with vitamin D to help boost immunity. Could a multivitamin mouthwash be next? Watch this space.

A SUSTAINABLE SMILE

Shockingly, 268 million toothbrushes are sent to landfill each year. Reswirl is a new start-up looking to change that, producing toothbrushes with bio-based and biodegradable plastics made from fermented corn crops that can be popped into at-home composts or returned to be remoulded into new brushes.

The subscription model is another avenue for brands looking to go eco. Floe Oral Care sends out a pack containing sugarcane tubes of toothpaste, a recyclable toothbrush and biodegradable floss, and has a free returns service, while Happier Beauty offers flexible subscriptions for three months' supply of its kind-to-the-environment toothpaste.

Packaged in aluminium with no outer cardboard box and a lid-return scheme, they even come with reusable squeeze keys to ensure zero waste.

Tooth tablets are also gaining traction, with brands including Pärlla, Brushd and Georganics offering a solution to tubes and pumps. Sold in reusable glass jars with refills available, you pop one in your mouth, chew the tablet and brush as normal – water from your toothbrush will convert it into a paste.

TIKTOK TEETH

TikTok is responsible for many bonkers beauty trends and the latest showcases CHROM, an American 'fashion toothpaste' that's basically (wait for it...) make-up for teeth. In a rainbow of colours, with or without 'sparkle', it's applied to teeth like nail polish and lasts 24 hours. Developed by dentists, wearers are treating it like an 'accent nail' in a mani (we're politely declining).

Flavours are another area where research and development teams are getting creative. 'Mint isn't a prerequisite of whether it's a good product or not, it's just years of associating it with a clean mouth because of its cool, refreshing feeling,' says Dr Eskander. In New Zealand, Ukiwi has cherry, blueberry and kiwi flavours, while here, Curaprox's Be You range includes Challenger, a gin and tonic flavour, and Candy Love – watermelon. Cocofloss, the Californian brand that's just landed at cultbeauty.co.uk, has coconut, strawberry and orange flavours in its floss line-up.

For something less frou-frou, natural botanicals are now featuring regularly and read more like a skincare label. Dr Hauschka includes sage, thyme and lemon in its sensitive toothpaste, LA Pacific has developed the first CBD toothpaste with ▶

added aloe vera and vitamin E, Happier's formula has papain (a papaya extract that naturally whitens), while MOON uses immune-boosting ingredients, such as ginseng and echinacea. And while professionals aren't averse to the more natural approach, the prerequisite is that any dental product must (we repeat, *must*) contain fluoride. Helping to demineralise teeth and strengthen them, without it, they're more at risk from erosion from acids and sugars. 'The key is the dose,' says Eskander. 'Too much can be detrimental but the amount in toothpaste is extremely safe.'

Whether you want to simply whiten and brighten, extend your sustainability commitment to your smile or get playful with flavours, this is just the beginning of the oral beauty boom.

BRUSH THIS WAY

CHANGE your toothbrush/ toothbrush head every three months. If you've been ill, follow the Oral Health Foundation guidelines and change it immediately to stop infection spreading.

DON'T RINSE after you've brushed your teeth. 'This is a very common mistake. Rinsing after brushing will wash away all of the protection provided by your toothpaste,' says dentist Dr Victoria Sampson.

SWITCH UP your mouthwash routine and use a refreshing mouthwash in the middle of the day (separate from brushing) to deter decay. 'This will not only avoid washing away the aforementioned protection, but it will keep the active ingredients in your mouth topped up and stop the overgrowth of bacteria if you've eaten anything sugary,' says dentist and co-founder of Spotlight Oral Care, Dr Lisa Craven.

FLOSS LIKE YOU MEAN IT. 'Not flossing is like washing just 65% of your body,' continues Craven. 'If you floss, you're far less likely to get infections such as gum disease, decay and a dry mouth.'

*2020 SURVEY BY SMILEDIRECT.LONDON | PHOTOS: TORY RUST GALLERY STOCK

A MORE SUSTAINABLE SMILE



Brushd Stainless Steel Tongue Scraper, £3.99, brushd.co.uk



Cocofloss dental floss, £8.40 each, cuitbeauty.com



Waken Strawberry & Mint Mouthwash, £4.50, wakenecare.com



Happier toothpaste, £7.50, happierbeauty.com



Zendium mouthwash, £6.99, feelunlike.com



LA Pacific Gum Health Enzyme Whitening Toothpaste, £11.99, boots.co.uk



Pärla Toothpaste Tabs, £6.95, parliatoothpastetabs.com



Spotlight Water Flosser, £89.95, spotlightoralcare.com