

# Scientists develop new tool to improve oral hygiene

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Inspektor TC

(PhysOrg.com) -- Scientists at the University of Liverpool have developed a new dental product to identify plaque build-up in the mouth before it is visible to the human eye.

The toothbrush-sized product has a blue light at its tip, which, when shone around the mouth and viewed through yellow glasses with a red filter, allows plaque to be seen easily as a red glow. The device, produced in collaboration with dental and healthcare developers, Inspektor Research Systems BV, has been designed for everyday use in the home.

Dentists currently use disclosing agents in tablet form to uncover tooth decay and plaque but these often stain the mouth and taste unpleasant. The new product, known as Inspektor TC, will be particularly useful for those who are vulnerable to dental diseases such as children and the elderly.

Children in the UK have had an average of 2.5 teeth filled or removed by the age of 15 because of tooth decay. In young people alone £45 million is currently being spent every year on the problem.

Professor Sue Higham, from the University's School of Dental Sciences, said: "It is extremely difficult to get rid of all plaque in the mouth. Left undisturbed it becomes what we call 'mature' plaque and gets thicker. This is what leads to gingivitis, or bleeding gums, and decay.

"Early stage plaque is invisible, and so this device will show people the parts of the mouth that they are neglecting when they brush their teeth, enabling them to remove plaque before it becomes a problem.

"Inspektor TC is designed so that people can easily incorporate it into their daily dental hygiene routine at home. We now hope to work with industry partners to develop this prototype so that people can use it in the home to identify plaque before any serious dental work is needed."

The team has now received a Medical Futures Innovation Award for the product - a commendation which acknowledges significant innovation in science.

Provided by University of Liverpool

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