

Last year we launched the ‘Hearty Smile’ campaign to coincide with World Heart Day. Our aim was to raise awareness of the link between gum health and heart disease as well as support the Irish Heart Foundation.

Background

In 2010, research was published which showed that people who rarely or never brush their teeth are 70 times more likely to develop heart disease than people who brush regularly. As a practice with a commitment to promoting dental health, we were motivated to run an awareness campaign. We used World Heart Day as the opportunity to highlight the link between cardiovascular disease and gum disease. We called our initiative the Hearty Smile Campaign.

The campaign

All the team got involved. We gave out flyers with information on gum health and why it is so important to care for your whole mouth, not just your teeth. The leaflets included links to websites where patients could find additional information. We decorated the practice with heart-shaped balloons and put up posters. This made it easy to engage patients in conversation. It was our aim to encourage them to give extra attention to their dental hygiene routine as well as make an appointment to see Val, our hygienist. She could then continue to educate them, using our dental health check as the starting point.

Fund-raising

The launch of the Hearty Smile campaign was timed to coincide with World Heart Day which was being marked by the Irish Heart Foundation. (IHF). The IHF were very supportive of our activities and put information about our campaign on their website. Several staff from the practice joined the IHF’s fund-raising walk in Dublin’s Phoenix Park, giving out our Heart Smile campaign information as they went. Combined with the fund-raising in the practice, we made a total of 350 Euros.

Awareness-raising

We won the support of our local newspaper, the Nationalist. On the day that the representative from the Irish Heart Foundation came to collect the cheque for 350 Euros, the paper sent around a photographer. (See photo opposite) We believe that we helped make a difference to patients’ understanding of dentistry and why mouth health has an impact on overall well-being. Val’s appointment book was much busier in the aftermath of the campaign, so more of our patients will have even healthier mouths. Good result all round!

