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Conflict of interest: none declared

Self-test questions

The following statements are either true or false (answers on page 87)

5. Toothbrushes with hard bristles should be used for removing dental plaque.
6. Regular massage of the gums prevents periodontal disease.

Dental notes

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Immunosuppressive drugs

See article on page 68

There is an increased likelihood of advanced periodontal disease in patients on long-term immunosuppressive medication.¹

Many patients also suffer from profound salivary hypofunction related to these drugs.²

The long-term care of these patients' dentition requires excellent oral hygiene measures, often including adjunctive agents, such as topical fluoride application. Regular dental reviews, professional vigilance and a strong emphasis on preventive

dentistry are necessary for the stability of these patients' dental health. They may also often be taking other medicines, such as bisphosphonates, so dentists need to take time to undertake a thorough review of each patient's medical history and continually check which drugs are being used. For patients taking corticosteroids who require invasive procedures such as dental extractions, increasing the dose is recommended to minimise the risk of adrenal crisis.

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