

QUALIFIED ADVICE

# ASK THE EXPERTS

Our panel of health experts answer your burning questions...



**DR MIHIR SHAH,**  
 head dentist at Battersea Park Dental and supporter of DenTek, the innovative oral care specialist  
[dentek.com](https://www.dentek.com)

**Q How can I keep my teeth healthy if I'm not able to see a dentist at the moment?**

"As visits to the dentist have been put on hold for now, it's never been more important to maintain our oral health. It plays a crucial part of our systemic body, but outbreak or no outbreak, you should avoid sharing your toothbrush with anyone. This is because it can cause a wide range of hygiene problems, as the toothbrush harbours bacteria and food particles that allows germs and viruses to proliferate which, in turn, is passed on to the person who uses it. A toothbrush can house more than 10 million bacteria and so, if you've suffered with the flu or contracted COVID-19 symptoms, it's recommended that you purchase a new toothbrush to prevent the spread of infection. Most of us will have more time on our hands with the new government restrictions, so add flossing to your daily brushing routine to remove food and plaque that can cause irritation if left to build up. For sensitive teeth and gums try the DenTek Sensitive Clean Floss Picks (£6, boots.com). If you'd like to take this opportunity to increase your self-care and show off your pearly whites post-lockdown, you should look for a toothpaste that contains fluoride and zinc for an optimal clean."

**STUART SANDEMAN,**  
 leading breath coach and founder of Breathpod  
[breathpod.me](https://www.breathpod.me)

**Q How can I use breathwork to control my anxiety?**

"Breathwork is one of the quickest and accessible ways to take back control of your life, and a common use of breathwork is to help ease anxiety. When we feel anxious, it means there's been a change in your autonomic nervous system, which is the part of the nervous system responsible for non-conscious bodily functions. The autonomic nervous system has a sympathetic response state (often referred to as the flight or fight response), and this is a stress reaction, for example if we were being chased by a tiger. The issue today is that there aren't many tigers around, yet we find ourselves in this anxious state due to the stresses and strains of the modern world we live in. Depending on how severe the anxiety is, we may wish to balance out the system and this can be achieved by box breathing. Inhale through your nose for a count of four, hold your breath for count of four, exhale through your nose for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four and repeat for four rounds or until you feel calm."

**Q How long does it take for muscle strength to diminish?**

"While the first noticeable losses in fitness when we might not be moving as much is cardiovascular, generally speaking, regular loading of the muscle is essential to maintain strength. It's assumed that heavy resistance and low repetition exercise is better to develop stronger muscles, but at momentary muscular failure [the point at which no more reps can be performed using perfect form], all motor units are recruited [the activation of additional motor units to accomplish an increase in contractile strength in a muscle] regardless of the load used. Lighter weights (or body weight movements) lifted to failure [the point at which fatigue is high enough to prevent a muscle from exerting the amount of force necessary to complete the current repetition] help maintain strength and prevent the loss in muscle mass. Aim for three sessions per week. If you're only able to do one or two, make up with increased volume. Always aim for quality body and weight movement when using low loads, lifted to failure."



**PROFESSOR MATHEW WILSON,**  
 head of sport and exercise medicine at ISEH in partnership with the Princess Grace Hospital, part of [HCA Healthcare UK](https://www.hcahealthcare.co.uk)  
[iseh.co.uk](https://www.iseh.co.uk)