

BDJ
PORTFOLIO

[**inside**view]



Profile Feature as seen in *British Dental Journal* 26 March 2021



Made in Sweden

WHY GREEN MATTERS MOST IN TEPE'S RAINBOW OF COLOURS

A conversation with **ELAINE TILLING**, Education and Projects Manager for TePe Oral Hygiene Products



For the last 30 years, TePe has been the leader in interdental brushes. Recommended by 94% of UK dental hygienists*, the TePe interdental brush (IDB) is at the heart of the company's 'It's all in the details' campaign to be launched at virtual dentistry shows this month. A new sustainable IDB is illustrative of TePe's goal to achieve carbon neutral products and packaging in 2022. Elaine Tilling outlines the benefits of a virtual visit to the TePe booth at upcoming online dentistry events.

How did the brand name TePe become a synonym for the interdental brush (IDB)?

Before TePe interdental brush (IDB) was launched in the UK, interdental cleaning meant using either floss or long, awkward brushes. Considerable dexterity was needed for both, and patients struggled. At the time, I was the Officer Commanding Dental Hygienist Training for the three armed forces, at Aldershot Garrison. I was asked to trial the TePe IDB. Small in size, with ergonomically designed handles in different colours for different sites, it was immediately appealing. After a few months of recommending the TePe IDB to our patients, our team of dental hygiene students could see the difference in patients' plaque levels. It was a game-changer. Gradually, the TePe brushes became available via the dental wholesalers and established as the most widely used IDB. Surveys show it is recommended by 94% of UK dental hygienists.

How is TePe developing its green credentials?

While we are known for our products, our ethos and processes are less publicised. Sustainability has been part of TePe's culture since the company's inception. We have been working for many years to ensure that environmental considerations are prioritised. For instance,

we already use solar power at our Swedish manufacturing base. Production is powered by 100 percent green energy and we are signed up to ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) 14001, the certification system for environmental management.

The giant step we have taken more recently is in changing the raw materials used in the manufacturing of the handle and cap of the IDB. European pine oil, a waste product of the Swedish paper industry, is now used to generate a plastic with an 80 percent lower carbon footprint. This allows us to continue to use our existing manufacturing plant, but track the percentage of raw material certificated as green energy. This figure is independently accredited by the ISCC.

How is the new brush different from its predecessor?

It is almost the same in every way: the same size, the same quality, the same metal brush in the same range of colours; it is just produced differently. We are keenly aware that busy practitioners are averse to change, and it's not something we do lightly. Not so long ago, there was a very slight alteration in the colour tone of three brushes. The green brush, for instance, changed from moss to mojito green. This was an essential step to define the colour range. The

DENTAL TEAMS MAY FIND THAT A MORE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT CAN HELP IMPROVE COMPLIANCE.

passionate response from professionals reflected just how ingrained in everyday use the TePe IDB is. Any change we make is driven by sustainability, function or quality.

What is the appeal of the new product?

I think dental teams will find that a more sustainable product will improve compliance. Patients who are aware of climate change are sometimes reluctant to use disposable products. Also, selling or recommending sustainable products makes a statement about your values as a business and how it conforms with the policies of the FDI World Dental Federation. It's not just the brush itself which is more sustainable; the packaging is too. The IDBs are supplied in a soft bag made of plant-based materials.

How do you feel about upcoming dental events being online?

On the one hand, it's sad not to be meeting up in person with dental care professionals. Due to our educational programme,

involving annual visits to the UK's dental and hygiene schools, we have many loyal supporters in the profession who like to see us at major dental events. On the other hand, online events are more sustainable, and we are hopeful that colleagues who would have visited in person will make that virtual journey to our online booth.

What next?

The sustainable IDB is an important milestone on our journey towards carbon neutral products and packaging in 2022, and it is central to our 'It's all in the details' campaign. We hope that our lead will help to generate demand for renewable materials, which will in turn help drive systemic change in the manufacturing of plastic.

For distributing the new product, the consumer launch will be gradual, starting early spring. The profession will get samples first, reflecting the emphasis we place on professional's advocacy.

*Source: A survey of 201 dental hygienists in the UK, Ipsos (2019).



80% less CO₂



Details that make all the difference

As the UK's No.1 selling IDB and most recommended by dental hygienists* you could forgive us for not wanting to change. That's why we've carefully examined every part of our business to find more sustainable solutions without compromising our products or your patients' oral health. We're using a range of initiatives from raw materials to energy supply that reduces our IDBs carbon footprint by 80%.

Get the details at tepe.com

*Source: A survey of 201 dental hygienists in the UK, Ipsos (2019)

SPRINGER NATURE