

# Orthodontic Products Update

## Toothbrushes

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### Introduction

As good oral hygiene is crucial to the successful outcome of orthodontic treatment, colleagues will be keen to either stock suitable toothbrushes for patients to acquire from them, or to recommend particular brushes for patients to buy in the shops. Recently (seemingly since this article was proposed), a plethora of new devices have appeared on the market, making this task even more complex than it used to be.

Because of the particular problems associated with plaque removal around orthodontic appliances, finding a single brush which is effective in all areas of the dentition is probably even more of a Holy Grail than for patients without appliances. A more rational approach would probably be to combine some form of manual or powered brush to clean the exposed areas with an interdental type brush to clean under the archwire and around the brackets. Since it is well known that few independent studies show major advantages in one type of brush over another, the choice of toothbrush will usually be influenced by personal preference and budget considerations. Moreover, this is a field where market forces, rather than scientific objectivity, prevail; in the most recent catalogue of CTS Dental Supplies there are more than 100 toothbrush products listed, excluding novelty and children's brushes. Readers will hopefully be pleased that I have chosen not to carry out an exhaustive review, but to focus on those which are either marketed as 'orthodontic' products or which could be regarded as being suitable for orthodontic patients.

The selection presented, of which there are many more products available, is entirely mine. To provide a semblance of objectivity in the absence of randomised controlled trials (RCT), I have tried out the products mentioned on a small group of patients, who have kindly provided their views on aspects such as comfort and ease of use.

### Conventional Toothbrushes

It seems that the majority of patients brush their teeth most of the time with conventional toothbrushes and they are spoilt for choice. Brush handles can be straight, angled or offset, with or without non-slip grips or flexible necks. The heads can be oblong, diamond-shaped or circular, with raised or depressed tufts. The general wisdom is that for brushing around and under fixed appliance components, especially in the areas gingival to the brackets, relatively simple toothbrushes with compact heads and soft bristles are the most suitable. My patient testers seemed to confirm this. Softer bristles were more

comfortable, especially where gingivae are inflamed, enabling them to brush more vigorously. This is probably more important than any particular design feature of the toothbrush.

My patients also preferred those brushes with plain, straight handles. Offset, angled or flexible necks seemed more hindrance than help in manipulating the brush over the appliance components. Of the other features currently in vogue, the softer or non-slip grips did find favour, and those brushes with elongated end-tufts ('Active Tips', as they are known) also seemed to offer some advantage if the patients were shown how to use the Active Tip section in the manner of an interdental brush in addition to a more normal brushing action.

I have listed a selection of 'compact' brushes and those with softer bristles in Table 1. This only includes those which are available for professional purchase in bulk; packaging is often more basic than for their High Street versions. According to a very recent survey by the Consumers Association, which I am not attempting to emulate, 'own brand' toothbrushes from larger supermarkets and chemists will have similar designs to those mentioned above, and are generally cheaper. For example, brushes from the Boots Total Care® range sell at £1.59 each, and colleagues who don't stock toothbrushes for sale might be happy to recommend patients to purchase these.

I stock for sale within my practice the Sensodyne Search Sensitive® (Fig. 1), a no-frills brush that seems versatile enough and is cheap to buy (or give away). A more feature-laden brush which I will possibly now stock as a result of this review is the Oral B Advantage Control Grip® (Fig. 1), which combines the straight handle and compact head with an Active Tip and non-slip grip.

Oral B and Butler G.U.M. market specific 'Orthodontic' brushes. The Oral B is the more compact design, being based upon the Plus 35 brush. Both feature a central depression, ostensibly to allow the brush to fit over the archwire. Presumably, the orientation of this groove assumes a horizontal side-to-side brushing action, which may not be the most appropriate technique for our patients. Two clinical trials to compare the Oral B Orthodontic® brush with its plain equivalent have been reported (Williams *et al.*, 1987; Kilicoglu *et al.*, 1997), but no significant differences were found. The Butler orthodontic brush is rather less compact than the Oral B, and my patients found it uncomfortable to use, with very firm bristles.

Orthocare supply two brushes aimed at orthodontic patients. The Plak Smacker® (Fig. 1) combines a compact, simple toothbrush with a built-in interdental brush at the other of the handle. My patients found this

TABLE 1 Conventional toothbrushes

Manufacturer	Name	Features	Trade price per dozen*	Shop price per brush
Oral B	Plus Indicator range, 30/35/40	Straight, plain; indicator filaments	£9.50	£1.99
Oral B	Plus Ortodontic	Same, with central groove	£14.60	N/A
Oral B	Plus Sensitive	Same, with softer bristles	£14.60	£1.99
Oral B	Advantage range, 30/35/40	Similar to Plus range with Active Tip	£10.20	£1.99
Oral B	Advantae range, Control Grip	Same, with Control Grip	£10.20	£1.99
Oral B	Pocket/Travel	Folding handle	£14.60	N/A
Stafford Miller	Sensodyne Search range, 3/3-5/4	Straight, plain	£9.40	£1.85
Stafford Miller	Sensodyne Search Sensitive 3-5	Same, with softer bristles	£9.40	£1.85
Colgate	Total Compact Medium	Angled, offset head; different height tufts; angled filaments	£9.89	£2.29
Colgate	Total Youth Soft	Same, smaller with softer bristles	£9.89	£2.29
Colgate	Diamond Head	Plain handle, compact head	£8.15	£1.49
SmithKline	Aquafresh Flex'n'Direct	Angled, "directable" head, flexible neck. Variable height tufts	£9.70	£2.29
Beechams	Interdental	Slightly angled neck, small head, soft grip, variable height bristles	£9.99	£2.49
SmithKline	Macleans The Toothbrush	Slightly offset head, non-slip handle, Active Tip	£10.99	£2.05
Beechams	Interdental	Angled head, soft grip	£8.75	£1.99
Jordan	Active Tip	Same, with softer bristles	£8.75	£1.99
Johnson & Johnson	Reach Control Compact Medium	Slightly angled neck, non-slip grip, compact head	£7.99	£1.79
Johnson & Johnson	Reach Control Compact Soft	Variable tuft height, broad, non-slip straight handle	£11.50	£2.09
Wisdom	Sure Grip	Straight handle	£9.00	£1.99
Wisdom	Contour	Central groove	£13.94	N/A
Benham	Butler G.U.M. Straight Compact	Central groove, folding handle	£13.94	N/A
Benham	Butler G.U.M. Ortho Trav-ler	Central Groove, folding handle	£6.00	N/A
Orthocare	Orthodontic Travel Brush	Double-ended—1 straightneck conventional head, 2 interdental brush	£6.00	N/A
Orthocare	Plak Smacker			

\*Excludes VAT.

Details of individual products may have changed since this article was prepared. Prices may vary and discounts for bulk or direct purchase are usually available.

relatively easy to use, but didn't like the light, thin handle. Its dual function possibly brings this brush close to the aforementioned Holy Grail; it is also very reasonably priced, so it won't matter too much if the rather flimsy interdental brush breaks off or wears out

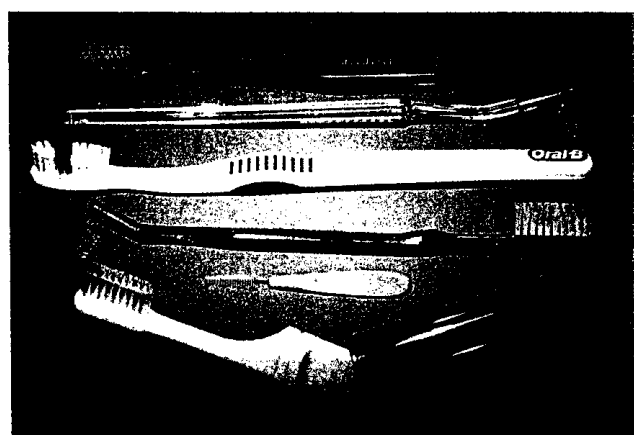


FIG. 1 A selection of manual toothbrushes. 1. Sensodyne Search Sensitive; 2. Oral B Interdental; 3. Oral B Advantage; 4. Plak Smacker; 5. Jordan Interdental; 6. Plak Smacker Travel Brush.

before the other end does. Orthocare also supply a Travel Brush, which features a medium-sized orthodontic head with a central groove. This fits inside a plastic case that becomes the handle for tooth brushing (Fig. 1). If patients are more likely to take this type of brush with them on their travels, and, therefore, brush after the midday meal, as well at the beginning and end of the day, then it must be worthwhile. It is also extremely cheap compared to equivalent offerings from Oral B and Butler G.U.M.

Many of the brushes specifically aimed at the youth or child market will also be suitable, as by virtue of their compact nature and styling, they are likely to appeal to, and therefore be used by, our patients. They are often in vibrant colours or else advertise the heroes of the hour, and it can be assumed that they will assist in motivation and look good in the bathroom—for a while! However, colleagues will keep large stocks of such fashion-orientated brushes at their peril.

Also available on the market are kits made up of various items (also available separately) to assist with tooth brushing. These are detailed in Table 2. The kit supplied by Orthocare appears to be the most useful and offers the best value for money. Assuming you approve of their contents, such kits may be useful to get patients started and should help with motivation. Colgate say they

TABLE 2 *Orthodontic oral hygiene kits*

Supplier	Name	Contents	Trade price	Suggested selling price
Orthocare	Orthodontic Home Care Kit	Plak Smacker toothbrush Trave toothbrush Mouth mirror Orthodontic Wax Time Instruction leaflet Floss pack Disclosing tablets Box	£3.60 each £3.10 each for 50+	£5.00
CTS	Fixed Appliance Ortho Kit	Oral B Orthodontic Brush CTS Super Interspace Brush Mouth mirror 500 ml bottle of Fluorigard 4 Disclosing tablets Plastic pouch	£5.75 each	£8.00
Colgate	Orthodontic Kit	Total Youth Soft toothbrush Gelkam Toothpaste Colgate Interdental Brush Leaflet Clear drawstring bag	£5.59 each (minimum order 24)	£8.00-£10.00
Dental Health Boutique	Oral Health Care Ortho Packs	Aquafresh Flex Interdental Compact Toothbrush Interspace Brush Aquafresh toothpaste Mouth Patrol mouthrinse 4 Disclosing tablets Leaflet Zipper Bag	£3.99 each for 12-24, reducing with larger orders	£5.00

are willing to change certain components of their kit to suit practitioners' requirements, within reason.

### Interdental Brushes

To supplement the action of conventional toothbrushes, interdental brushes are often recommended, and there are now many to choose from. I have selected those with 'bottle brush' type heads rather than the single tufted bristle head brushes, as the former seem to be better suited to cleaning in the space between brackets and under the archwire. These are described in Table 3.

For several years I have stocked the Oral B Interdental<sup>®</sup> brush (Fig. 1), mainly because the size and shape of the separately available tapered heads seem just right for orthodontic appliances. Moreover, the heads are robust and last well, and the brushes have always been readily available, albeit at a rather high price. Wisdom, Colgate and Butler manufacture similar brushes based on a handle and removable tip. As mentioned above, the Orthocare Plak Smacker<sup>®</sup> has an integral interdental brush which is similar to the Oral B, but the bristles are rather thin and would probably wear out more quickly. CTS sell refills for their 'Bottle Brush' range which will fit the Oral B handles and are significantly cheaper.

Now becoming readily available is the interdental brush with integral handle. These tend to be small and because the handles are in line with the brush head, may be easier to manipulate under the archwire by orthodontic patients. My patient testers were divided on this,

some preferring the longer handle as in the Oral B, and others preferring the shorter, integral grip. My own impression was that the smaller handle tended to get covered in saliva and tooth paste very quickly, making it slippery and somewhat unpleasant in use. Nevertheless, I liked the size and shape of the Jordan Interdental Brush (tapered head) (Fig. 1). The CTS Medallion range has a larger, more rounded grip, and may be easier to use by the less dextrous.

### Electric Toothbrushes

Six battery-powered electric toothbrushes are currently readily available; their features are summarised in Table 4, and some are shown in Fig. 2. With the exception of the Sonicare<sup>®</sup> and Reach Power Brush<sup>®</sup>, they incorporate brush heads with a rotary action, all with variations on a theme which possibly exist as much for marketing as clinical purposes. Enthusiastic claims are made in relation to their efficacy, especially the Sonicare<sup>®</sup>, which is also the most expensive.

The Braun D7 Plaque Remover<sup>®</sup> (Fig. 2) is an oscillating-rotary brush which was intended to have a specific orthodontic brush head available (as was used in a clinical trial conducted in my practice, see Clerehugh *et al.*, 1998, below), but this is not currently available. Brush heads need to be purchased separately, and have proved to be somewhat difficult to find unless supplied via the practice. They are also expensive. The brush was well liked by the 84 participants in the trial, being relatively

TABLE 3 *Interdental Brushes*

Manufacturer	Name	Features	Trade price	Shop price each
Oral B	Interdental brush	Kit: handle and 2 refill heads	£22.25 (dozen)	£2.99
Oral B	Interdental refills	6 heads, choice of tapered or cylindrical	£22.25 (dozen)	£2.99
Colgate	Interdental brush	Kit: handle with thumb grip and "snap in" heads	£22.99 (dozen)	£2.99
Colgate	Interdental refills	3 heads, choice of tapered or cylindrical	£20.60 (dozen)	£2.49
Wisdom	Interproximal	Kit: handle and 4 refill heads	£23.99 (dozen)	£2.99
CTS	CTS Bottle Brushes	Small handle, variety of sizes	£1.60 (Pack of 10)	N/A
CTS	Bottle Brush refills	Tapered or cylindrical heads, also fit Oral B	£1.60 (Pack of 10)	N/A
CTS	CTS Medallion	Interdental brushes with fixed, rounded handles; 4 sizes: tapered recommended	£1.25 (Pack of 5)	N/A
Jordan	Interdental Brush	Fixed handles, 4 sizes: tapered recommended	£1.49 (Pack of 5)	N/A

TABLE 4 *Electric Brushes*

Manufacturer	Model	Features	Trade price	Shop price each
Braun	D7 Plaque Remover (Personal)	Oscillating-rotating head; built-in timer	£28.75	£39.25
Braun	EB9 Replacement Heads	Heads for above	single £3.25 twin £5.75 triple £7.25	
Rotadent	Interplak 160	Individual contra-rotating tufts	£34.32 (orders >£150)	£49.95
Rotadent	6-tuft brush head for Interplak	Replacement brush head for above	£5.75	£7.95
Rotadent	Rota-dent Toothbrush	Rotating head, similar to dental handpiece. Choice of brush tips	£44.60 (orders >£150)	(RSP) £64.95
Rotadent	Rota-dent charger	Needed for above!	£6.99	(RSP) £10.45
rotadent	Rota-dent brush heads	Pack of 3: Assorted, Hollow, Short (rec for ortho) or Long	£2.99	(RSP) £4.40
Rotadent	Rota-dent replacement neck	Not usually needed	£3.95	(RSP) £6.30
Optiva (CTS)	Sonicare	Ultrasonic action. Built-in timer, which beeps for each quadrant	£87.99 (2–5 units)	£129.50
Optiva (CTS)	Sonicare replacement heads	Adult or child size available	£8.99 single £15.99 twin	£14.99 £24.99
Philips Jordan	HP510 Plaque Remover	Oscillating-rotating head, built-in interdental head. Controlled pressure sensor	£25.50	£39.95
Philips Jordan	HP790 replacement heads	Twin pack of replacement heads for above	£5.10	£7.95
Johnson & Johnson	Reach Power Brush	Small, compact conventional head. Needs 1 × AA battery, about 1 month life	£3.75	£5.99
Johnson & Johnson	Reach Power Brush replacement heads	Two replacement heads for above—straight or spiral neck	£2.99	£3.99

light and easy to manipulate over the attachments. The vibration set up by the oscillating action makes for rather messy brushing, and this, and the general lack of portability of the unit and its accompanying charger acts as a disincentive to casual brushing or brushing outside the home. Perhaps significantly, very few of the afore-

mentioned trial subjects continued to use the electric brush up to the completion of their treatment.

The Interplak<sup>®</sup> brush was felt to be unwieldy in use and rather uncomfortable where the relatively sharp, rotating tufts come into contact with the gingivae. Again, brushing tended to be a messy affair. Brush heads, which

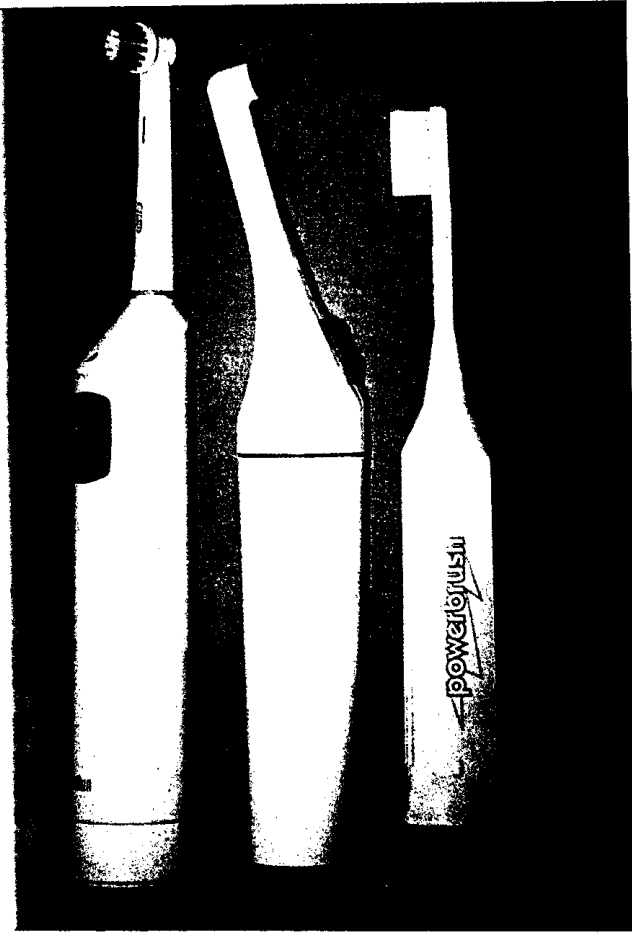


FIG. 2 A selection of electric toothbrushes. 1. Oral B D7; 2. Rota-dent; 3. Reach Power Brush.

can be either 6 or 10 tufted, need to be bought separately, and would appear to only be available via dental supply companies. The newly marketed Philips/Jordan HP510 Plaque Remover has a main head similar to the Braun D7, and has an Interdental head attached to it which also vibrates. Unfortunately, the Interdental section is too wide to fit readily between brackets, and it was found to be too difficult to use effectively.

My practice testers liked the Rota-dent<sup>®</sup> brush (Fig. 2), for its smooth and relatively gentle action. Because this is a pure rotational movement, care needs to be taken to ensure that the brush does not skip off brackets or other obstacles, but once mastered it is easy to use. A choice of brush heads are available, which detach from the neck (also detachable from the body and available separately). The short tip head is suitable for orthodontic patients and readily penetrates under the archwire, yet still seems to be effective on the other parts of the teeth. The Rota-dent<sup>®</sup> and accessories are only available via dental practices. The heads are considerably cheaper than those for the other electric brushes.

The Sonicare<sup>®</sup> brush is an oscillating design with a conventional head. Its main feature is the high vibration frequency (250 per second), which, it is claimed, creates a mild cavitation effect and hence increases the efficiency

of plaque removal. Its main advantage, in particular for orthodontic patients, is the potential for removal plaque even when there is no direct pressure from the bristles. In use, it was comfortable once patients had grown accustomed to the vibration, but very messy. The main disadvantage would appear to be its very high purchase price. If, however, its claimed advantages over conventional electric brushes are verified by long-term RCT's, it could be the one to have!

As usual, for most patients, the actual brush design is probably secondary to the patient's own ability and motivation to brush thoroughly. The work of White (1983) suggests that patients who have chronically poor oral hygiene show reluctance to use appropriate pressure whilst tooth brushing, perhaps due to low sensitivity thresholds. It is always tempting to think that powered brushes may be particularly useful for such patients, and for those who lack manual dexterity to overcome the considerable handicap posed by the fixed appliance. The published studies of electric brushes on orthodontic patients are generally equivocal or else show relatively modest improvements in gingival inflammation levels in favour of the electric brush under trial. A comprehensive literature review on this subject is beyond the scope of this article, but readers may care to refer to studies by Clerehugh *et al.* (1998, Braun D7<sup>®</sup>), Heintze *et al.* (1997, Braun D7<sup>®</sup>, Rota-end<sup>®</sup>, and Interplak<sup>®</sup>), White (1996, Sonicare<sup>®</sup>), Wilcoxon *et al.* (1991, Interplak<sup>®</sup>), and Boyd *et al.* (1989, Rota-dent<sup>®</sup>).

Few of the studies available relate to the entire treatment period, or address the novelty, or motivational aspects of electric brushes. Based on the available evidence, it would appear that the cost of electric toothbrushes outweigh the benefits provided by their use, but it can be assumed that there will always be a demand for them. Nevertheless, only a handful of my patients claim to continue using their electric brushes to the end of treatment and beyond. It may seem heretical, but if the novelty effect of having an electric brush is thought to be helpful, colleagues might do worse than to recommend patients spend £5.99 on a Reach Power Brush<sup>®</sup> (Fig. 2). Although it is little more than a compact, conventional brush which vibrates, it may be all that is needed.

### Acknowledgements

I should like to thank my small panel of patients, who tried out the products described, and whose gingivae might still be smarting. Thanks also to those suppliers who either loaned or donated toothbrushes.

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**Useful Addresses**

**Orthocare (UK) Limited**, 5 Oxford Place, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD3 0EF. Tel: 01274 392017. Plak Smacker brushes, Home care kit, other orthodontic supplies!

**CTS Dental Supplies**, Three Arch Business Park, Three Arch Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 5SS. Tel: 01737 765400. Virtually everything else, though not always as cheap as direct from the manufacturers. Sonicare electric brush.

**Oran B Laboratories Ltd/Braun UK**, Gillette UK Ltd, Great West Road, Isleworth, Middx TW7 5NP. Tel: 0181 847 7800.

**Rotadent Ltd**, 15 Little End Road, Eaton Socon, Cambs PE19 3JH. Tel: 01480 471972. Rota-dent and Interplak electric brushes.

**Stafford-Miller Ltd**, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 3SP. Tel: 01707 331001. Sensodyne Search range.

**Dental Health Boutique**, Unit 1G, Merrow Business Centre, Guildford, Surrey GU4 7WA. Tel: 0191 416 3774. Oral Health Care Ortho Packs (also available via SmithKline Beecham).

**Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals Ltd**, Guildford Business Park, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5LZ. Tel: 01483 464489.

**SmithLine Beecham Ltd**, 17 Oliver Close, Dearnley, Littleborough, Lancs OL15 8NH. Tel: 01706 371205. Aquafresh, Macleans range.

**Jordan UK**, Tweedbank Industrial Estate, Galashiels, Selkirk TD1 3RS. Tel: 01896 754400.

**Johnson and Johnson**, Dental Care Division, Foundation Park, Roxburgh Way, Berks SL6 3UG. Tel: 01628 821324. Reach toothbrushes.

## Trade Products News

**David Burdess Orthodontics Ltd**

Building on his long experience in the Orthodontic business, David Burdess has recently started a new Orthodontic supply company. The product range include a wide variety of Orthodontic sundries and is currently expanding. Ikonpliers and cutters which come with a 5 year warranty covering corrosion, materials and craftsmanship, are available. One product that catches the imagination is wintergreen flavoured patient relief wax in a green mint scented wax box!

Further details and prices are available from David Burdess Orthodontics Ltd., PO Box 188, Bingley, W. Yorkshire, BD16 1YP. Tel: 01535 271446. Fax: 01535 275410.

**The New Sonicareplus Toothbrush**

Following a recent appearance on Tomorrow's World, this toothbrush is now available from CTS Dental Supplies (Tel: 01737 765400). For those who missed the programme, the new Sonicare toothbrush generates 31,000 brush strokes a minute whilst emitting sonic waves. This property is said to facilitate cleaning beyond the bristles—the manu-

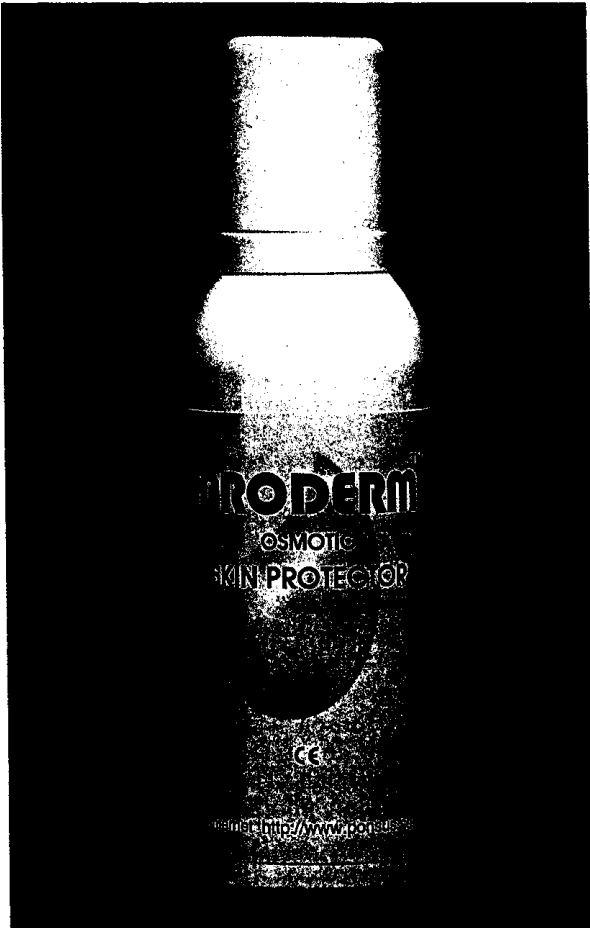
facturers claim that the acoustic waves can reach up to 3mm beyond the end of the bristles. Because the speed of the brush head is so fast it appears as a blur to the naked eye.

The new design of head is 20 per cent smaller than its predecessor and the brush now features rechargeable nickel cadmium batteries which can be recharged in half the time. A child size head which is 50 per cent smaller than the previous adult model is now available. This smaller head may be useful for patients with orthodontic appliances, implants, bridgework etc. Each head size fits both the new and existing power handles. The bristles, are end rounded and 0.006 inch diameter at the tip.

Further details, including the results of clinical trials comparing manual toothbrushing against the Sonicare brush, are available from Tracy Posner (Tel: 0181 5670318) or Catherine Fitzsimons (Tel: 0181 7548265).

**Proderm**

Proderm Osmotic Skin Protector may be welcome news for those with a latex allergy. It is an easily absorbed cream foam which is said to provide barrier protection against



chemical irritants and allergens. The beneficial effects are said to last for 4–6 hours even with frequent hand washing. The manufacturers recommend that it should be applied twice a day to ensure maximum protection.

Further details can be obtained from Routeene (UK) Limited, 63, Hallmark Trading Estate, Fourth Way, Wembley Industrial Estate, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0HW. Tel: 0181 9033936, Fax: 0181 9009732.

### 3M Unitek's Narrow Contoured Molar Band

This molar band is designed with a narrower occlusal-gingival height compared to 3M Unitek's normal molar band. The narrow contoured band features a festooned occlusal interproximal configuration and anatomical contouring. The manufacturers, 3M Unitek claim this innovative feature ensures festooning just below the occlusal edge of the molar, while avoiding occlusal interference.

This new band is made of a softer stainless steel which adapts more readily to the tooth. It is available in both micro-etched and non-micro-etched versions.

Further details and prices are available from 3M Unitek Orthodontic Products, PO Box 1, Bradford, W. Yorkshire, BD5 9UY. Tel: 01274 392222, Fax: 01274 392227.

