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## A Dental Health Guide for Teachers and Parents (1940)

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# A DENTAL HEALTH GUIDE

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*For Teachers and Parents*

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## FACTS ABOUT THE TEETH

Good teeth are important for four reasons:

1. They are necessary for good health.
2. They are essential to beauty and a good physical appearance.
3. They are necessary for mastication.
4. They assist in speech.

## BABY TEETH

Nature has given us two sets of teeth, baby (or deciduous) teeth, and permanent teeth.

There are twenty baby teeth. They are partly formed before the child is born. They begin to appear when the baby is about six months old, and usually all are erupted at two and one-half years. Normally, they are all lost by the age of twelve. Because the baby teeth have important duties to perform during the first twelve years of life, they should have the best attention and care. They should not be considered as temporary teeth.

### The Baby Teeth Should Be Preserved Until They Are Replaced by the Permanent Teeth

1. For thorough chewing of food.
2. To help guide the permanent teeth into position.
3. To aid in normal jaw development.
4. To prevent irregularity of the permanent teeth.

## PERMANENT TEETH

Normally, there are thirty-two permanent teeth. The first of the permanent teeth to erupt are the first permanent molars. They usually appear between the fifth and seventh year. Hence, they are frequently called the "sixth-year molars." They erupt immediately behind the last baby teeth and frequently are mistaken for baby teeth. There are four first permanent molars, two in the upper jaw and two in the lower jaw. These four "sixth-year molars" are the most valuable teeth in the mouth.

The loss of even one of the first permanent or "sixth-year molars" may cause the other teeth to shift their positions; which may destroy the natural appearance and beauty of the child. The first permanent molars should be examined by a dentist just as soon as they erupt into the mouth, and they, as well as all of the other permanent teeth, should be preserved throughout life.

## EARLY AND REGULAR CARE

The child should be taken to the dentist soon after all the baby teeth have appeared, at about the age of two and one-half or three years, and thereafter at least twice a year or more often, for a dental examination. If decay is found early, the dentist can remove it with little or no pain and fill the cavity while it is small.

If treatment is delayed, decay progresses toward the pulp (nerve) in the center of the

tooth, causing more pain and later leading to illness.

The mouth is an ideal place for the growing of disease germs as it has the temperature, moisture and food material needed for their growth. The cleaner the surfaces of the teeth can be kept, the less inviting they are to germs. The grooves on the chewing surfaces of the teeth, the surfaces between the teeth, and also the surfaces near the gum margins require special brushing, because food and germs are easily retained in these places. Decay usually begins there.

Take the child to the dentist before discomforting operations are necessary. This will prevent fear of the dental office and enable the dentist to make friends with the child.

## DECAY, OR CARIES

Dental caries is the technical term for tooth decay. The actual cause of dental decay is as yet unknown. Most studies on this subject seem to indicate that decay of the enamel and dentin is caused by the action of mouth germs (bacteria) upon certain foods, principally sweets, when left on the teeth. This action produces acids which destroy the enamel and dentin of the teeth and, if continued without interference, will cause the death of the pulp (nerve). Poisons from the infected pulp (nerve) may cause an abscess to form at the end of the tooth root.

This infection, if not eliminated, not only

affects the teeth and jaws, but also, eventually, may be carried to other parts of the body such as the heart, eyes, kidneys and joints.

To prevent this, even small defects in the teeth should be immediately corrected.

## BRUSHING TEETH

Teeth should be brushed regularly and thoroughly because brushing improves their appearance. It also gives a sense of cleanliness of the mouth, stimulates circulation of the blood in the gums and helps prevent decay and other dental disorders.

It should be recognized that brushing alone is inadequate for the prevention of dental caries. It represents only one of the procedures that must be utilized in the development of mouth hygiene.

The teeth should be thoroughly brushed after each meal, or at least every night before going to bed and every morning after breakfast, and the mouth should be thoroughly rinsed with warm water.

Children should use a small toothbrush and adults should use one of medium size. Selection of the toothbrush and the method of brushing are very important in the care of the teeth and gums. Your dentist can advise you regarding the type of brush and the toothbrushing method best suited to your mouth.

The cleansing agents used may be tooth powder, tooth paste, pulverized salt or salt

water, baking soda or water, as recommended by your dentist. Dentifrices should not contain harmful or objectionable ingredients.

### NUTRITION AND DENTAL HEALTH

Teeth in the formative stages are sensitive to the many conditions that affect growth and health. An adequate diet is needed at all ages, and particularly during the growing and developing years.

Some foods are more nearly adequate than others for protecting health and promoting growth. They are called the "protective foods" and they should form the basis of meal planning. These foods include milk and milk products, vegetables and fruits, whole grain cereals and breads, eggs and lean meat, poultry and fish. In some sections of the country, iodized salt and, in most areas, fish liver oils may well be added to these foods.

An adequate diet will contain a sufficient amount of foods rich in carbohydrates, without the addition of large amounts in concentrated form, such as would be found in candies, jams and jellies.

In the dental field, many research workers agree that there is a relationship between eating candy or excessive amounts of sugar and dental caries. By restricting the use of sugar in the diet, it has been possible to control dental caries.

Special effort should be made every day to include raw or crisp foods requiring chew-

ing, such as head lettuce, celery, raw fruits, raw carrots, raw cabbage, hard toast and bread crusts.

### GOOD DENTAL HABITS

1. Brushing the teeth at least twice a day, after breakfast and supper, with a small toothbrush and a good cleansing agent.
2. Eating plenty of nourishing foods.
3. Eating some coarse foods that require chewing.
4. Getting plenty of fresh air and sunshine and also plenty of rest.
5. Visiting the dentist at least twice a year for a dental examination. He is your friend and will advise you as to what is needed.

### HARMFUL DENTAL HABITS

1. Neglecting to eat nourishing foods.
2. Overindulgence in sweets.
3. Neglecting to brush the teeth.
4. Neglecting to visit the dentist.
5. Mouth breathing.
6. Thumb, lip, finger or tongue sucking or biting.

### DENTAL DEFECTS MAY LEAD TO

1. Pain.
2. Irritability.
3. Loss of teeth.

4. Loss of chewing surface.
5. The omission from the diet of foods which require chewing.
6. Bad breath.
7. Loss of a natural facial expression.
8. Self-consciousness and an inferiority complex.
9. An unsightly condition of the teeth and malformation of the jaws.
10. Lowered physical resistance and impairment of general health.
11. Great expenditures for correction.

### STANDARDS FOR A GOOD SET OF TEETH

1. All teeth should be present.
2. The teeth should be clean, not discolored, and free from decay.
3. The teeth should be even, not crowded, regularly formed and not widely spaced.
4. The cusps of the upper molar teeth should fit in between the cusps of the lower molar teeth. Also, the upper teeth should slightly overlap the lower teeth.

The Bureau of Public Relations  
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