

Dental Health Guide

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Good teeth are important for four reasons:

They are necessary for good health.

Good looking teeth are an asset to good appearance.

They are necessary for mastication.

They assist in speech.

Foundation Teeth

Nature has given us two sets of teeth, foundation (or baby) teeth, and secondary teeth.

There are twenty foundation teeth. They are partly formed before the child is born. They begin to appear when the baby is about six months old, and usually are erupted at two and one-half years. Normally, they are all lost by the age of twelve. Because the foundation 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 but as foundation teeth; and the last four molars to erupt, two on the upper jaw and two on the lower jaw are perhaps the most important teeth of this set, as they guide and hold the four "6th year molars" to their proper position in the mouth.

The foundation teeth should be preserved in health until the secondary teeth are ready to erupt: For thorough chewing of food; to help guide the secondary teeth into position; to aid in normal gnaw development; to prevent irregularity of the secondary teeth.

Secondary Teeth

Normally, there are thirty-two secondary teeth. The earliest of the secondary teeth to erupt are the first so-called 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. These four "six-year molars," two in the upper jaw and two in the lower jaw are exceedingly valuable and very often neglected.

The loss of even one of the earliest secondary or "sixth-year molars" may cause the other teeth to shift their positions; which may destroy the natural form of the face and even the good appearance of the child. The first

secondary 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 so-called permanent teeth, should be preserved throughout life, if proper care is taken.

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 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, and thus preserve the tooth.

If treatment is delayed, decay progresses toward the pulp (nerve) in the centre of the tooth, causing more pain and later leading to an abscess and sometimes 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.

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. 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.

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 causes of dental decay are 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 may cause an abscess to form at the end of the tooth root.

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