

Care of the Teeth

By Dr. Y. C. Srivastava

ONE out of every six Indians reaches the age of forty-five without his original teeth because they fail to realize the importance of tooth care and take their teeth for granted.

Tooth Decay

A major cause of tooth decay, it is believed, is the refined sugar and starch in the foods that a great many people eat. These are acted on by bacteria in the mouth, producing harmful acids that begin attacking the enamel of the teeth within a few minutes. Thus, if food is left between the teeth, it permits the bacteria, over a period of time, to produce acids that gradually break down the enamel in those spots. Although tooth enamel is the hardest substance in our body, it cannot resist indefinitely prolonged and repeated acid attacks.

After a while a small cavity will form in the tooth and decay will progressively eat away the tooth. If left untreated the cavity will steadily grow larger and larger. The infection may set in and spread to the jawbone and other parts of the mouth. Then you will be in real trouble.

It would, therefore, be wise to prevent such cavities and treat the cavities that have already appeared promptly. The Dentist's drill, of course, is not pleasant, but when a cavity is small the pain would be much less. The longer you put off your visit to a dentist the more painful your visit would be.

Among children, decay is the primary cause of loss of teeth. Parents, therefore, should teach their children the proper methods of tooth care and get their teeth examined regularly.

Gum Infections

Disorders of the gums and of other tissues connected with the

teeth are said to be the major cause of loss of teeth after the age of thirty-five. One of these disorders is called gingivitis. It is caused by accumulation on the teeth of food particles and tartar, which irritate the surrounding tissues. Tartar is an incrustation of food residues and other substances.

If this condition is allowed to continue, the gums can become badly inflamed, swollen and tender. They may eventually draw away from the teeth, causing pockets to form between the gums and the teeth making the situation worse. The tissues may never re-attach to the teeth, and the bone under the teeth may develop infections that destroy it. Eventually the teeth become loose and will have to be removed.

Artificial Teeth

A full set of artificial teeth cannot function as a complete set of normal, healthy teeth. They can cause much discomfort and many problems to those wearing them.

Of course, there may be occasions when bad teeth have to be removed. When this happens a prompt replacement of the missing tooth by an artificial one is recommended. The other teeth can be adversely affected when a tooth is missing unless the empty space is filled. The adjacent teeth and the opposing teeth can be caused to shift out of their normal position because of the undue pressure put on them. This can injure the supporting bone and soft tissues surrounding the shifting teeth. Therefore, filling gaps promptly with artificial teeth is recommended.

Teeth in Good Condition

Proper nutrition is an important factor in developing and maintaining good teeth. Even before a baby is born the principal develop-

ment of his teeth has begun, and this means that the mother needs good nutrition because it affects the development of the child's teeth as well as the rest of his body.

After a child is born, adequate amounts of protein, minerals and other important food elements are needed for proper growth of the teeth. It requires a measure of discipline to make the child eat what is for the good of his body, and not only what pleases him. Control over the snacks he eats later on is also necessary because of the usual preference children have for tooth-damaging sweets.

Parents can encourage their children to get in the habit of eating raw foods, such as fruits, nuts and vegetables as snacks. These are much better for their teeth and their general nutrition than candies and pastries. Raw fruits and vegetables help to keep the teeth clean and the body healthy.

If you have the custom of eating pastries and other foods with starch and refined sugar, it is not likely that you will readily change your eating habits to protect your teeth. But you can do something to help protect the teeth from the acids formed after eating such foods. You can keep your teeth clean by frequent use of a tooth brush.

Brushing your teeth will prevent food from collecting on your teeth and doing damage by remaining there for long periods. Doing so after each meal means that less tooth-damaging acid will be formed. It also means that food particles will not be decaying in your mouth, to cause inflammation of the tissues and a foul odour. Dentures also need to be cleaned after each meal so as to maintain a clean mouth.

Before going to bed at night is a very important time to brush your teeth. Otherwise the bacteria will work throughout the night on the food particles and produce tooth-destroying acids. By keeping your teeth clean over long periods, such as at night, you can help keep your mouth less susceptible to tooth decay and diseases of the connecting tissues.

(Contd. on page 60)

MIBE (Contd. F.P. 45)

controlling treatment of patients helped the progress of medicine, despite the fact that punishments were cruel. As the Roman Empire grew in power and strength, morality decreased and cruelty was the order of the day. It was at this time that Jesus Christ came on the scene to spread His spirit of love and mercy.

A complete change was effected. Slaves were set free, the poor received alms, the blind, the lame and sick were helped. Wealthy Roman Matrons who were converted to Christianity threw open the doors of their palaces to the poor and the sick. The Nuns behind the screen gave an idea of the strenuous work done by the Sisters of Charity in Hotel Dieu in Paris several centuries ago. Elizabeth Fry helped those in prison; and Henry Dunant began the work of the Red Cross with wounded soldiers. The show ended with a scene of Florence Nightingale, the Founder of Nursing, with a group of Nurses.

Dev : of Nsg—(Contd. F.P. 46)

atives or ability—only “yes madam” people—resulting in inferior quality of service with no dignity and prestige to the profession. This seems to be the foremost weakness.

On the other hand, there are those brilliant, and efficient leaders who succumb to the common danger of being involved with national and international committees and organisations. Soon the responsibilities for which they were prepared and appointed receive too little of their time, and they themselves lose the skills. This is true of the medical profession.

There are other leaders who are overly enthusiastic and become the devoted committee members. Soon they become party members and politicians; lovers of power and prestige.

For the future development of nursing in the country these drawbacks should be avoided. Leaders must have farsight (vision), strength of character and devotion to duty. They must have courage of conviction.

We have to prove that Nursing is an art and a science: Those in leadership should be equipped

with general knowledge and particularly history to give broad and continuing education and sustain a balanced outlook on life. It is well to study the lives of outstanding leaders in the profession as some one said: “no progress is sound or lasting that is not superimposed upon what was good in the past or has stood the test of time.”

(Excerpts from a talk given by Miss Zachariah at the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the MIBE Graduate School of Nursing, Indore, on Dec. 14, 1970).

Pediatric Nsg—(Contd. F.P. 43)

learned most successfully when this concept is incorporated into the students daily life.

7. The students need the opportunity to think for herself to develop and carry out her individualised plans for patient care.

This will produce nurses with creative imagination and the desire to grow ability to work successfully with children and their families.

8. The experience should be so arranged that the student has time to know her patients as persons with special needs and diseases.

The development of a programme of this type requires personnel, skilled and experienced instructors, who can guide the students in the use of application of both knowledge and understanding.

Perhaps today, with shortage of professional nurses and nursing instructors, such a plan may sound impractical. Truly it may be difficult, but it is a method which can be recommended because it has proven to be satisfying and rewarding.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Benz, Gladys, “Pediatric Nursing, 5th Ed. St. Louis Mosby, 1964.
2. Marlow, Dorothy, Text Book of Pediatric Nursing 2nd Ed. London, 1966.
3. Lelfer, Gloria, Principles and Techniques in Pediatric Nursing, London, 1965.
4. Broadribb, Volient, Foundations of Pediatric Nursing, Philadelphia, 1967.
5. Ingles, Thelma, “Nursing Education must Keep up with Medicinal Modern Hospital, 85, 83-84, November, 1955.
6. Chayer, Mary E. “Emerging Patterns of Nursing Education”, Nursing in Modern Society, pp. 69-95, G.P. Punam's Son's New

York, 1947.

7. National League for Nursing. Nursing Education Programmes Today—National League for Nursing, New York 1961 pp. 15.
8. Aydelotte, Myrle Kitchell, “The Use of Patient Welfare as a Criterion Measure”, Nursing research, 2: 10-14, Winter, 1962.

Care of Teeth—(Contd. f.p. 39)

A dentifrice such as toothpaste ought to be used at night, as it can give the teeth a good cleaning. Because the dentifrice contains an abrasive for cleaning the surface of the teeth, it is better able to remove the food film that may cling to them. At other times of the day plain water, salt or even a little soap can be used with a toothbrush to clean food particles from the teeth. Every few months a little pumice powder with the dentifrice will give the teeth a very good cleaning, removing many of the stains that may accumulate. Using pumice too frequently can also damage tooth enamel. Be careful not to injure the gums by brushing too vigorously.

Effective brushing includes rotating the brush so that the bristles sweep the teeth from the gums to the biting edges. This, of course, needs to be done on the inside as well as the outside surfaces of the teeth. The chewing surfaces of the upper and lower back teeth also need to be brushed. Including a back-and-forth motion over all the surfaces of the teeth helps to polish them.

A child needs to be shown how to brush his teeth properly and encouraged to establish the habit of doing it regularly after every meal. A parent can get him in that habit by brushing his teeth for him until he is old enough to do it for himself.

The best way to keep down tooth cavities and prevent trouble resulting from inflamed tissues is to brush your teeth after each meal. Also visit your dentist regularly to have your teeth examined.

You can prevent tooth decay if you care to appreciate these marvelous instruments that the Creator has provided, and show that appreciation by giving them the good care they require.