



Teeth and It's Care

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Beliefs are born of knowledge. But half truths and incorrect information about dental problems and their scientific treatment protocol has led us to believe that dental treatment is uncannily expensive. Let's try to clear the air a bit by taking a look at evidence based dentistry that is based on hard facts rather than fictions and folklore. But let's not forget about the preventive measures which translates to mean "Prevention is better than Cure".

Babies and children dental care

1. Brushing must begin as soon as baby teeth erupts. Instead of a tooth brush, a gauze piece wrapped around the finger should be used. That's gentle dental care.
2. As your kid grows switch over to soft bristle baby tooth brush. Brushing should be performed by you.
3. By his fifth birthday you should have trained your kid to brush independently.
4. Try to avoid breast feeding beyond six months and stop by end of the year.
5. Break up your kid's diet in 4-5 mealtimes. Avoid snacking between meals. Take care that your child washes his/her mouth after taking any sort of food.
6. Ensure that your child rinses his/her mouth after taking chocolates and sweets.
7. Avoid sticky foods and chocolates and grow a habit of eating fibrous foods like cucumber.
8. Make brushing twice in 24 hrs a habit.
9. Don't forget to consult your dentist every six months for your child's dental check-up.

Adult Dental Care – Do's and Don'ts

1. Brush twice in 24 hrs. Flossing regularly makes an even

- better habit.
2. Eat healthy- avoid sticky and sweetened foods and drinks and include more of fibrous fruits and vegetables in your diet. Pile up on vitamin and mineral enriched foods.
 3. Proper brushing technique ensures proper utilization of the tooth brush and toothpaste. Through the T.V. ads have you believe that the toothpaste just needs to be applied and it does the job itself. Brush in a vertical (up and down) motion and not horizontally (the popular belief). Ask your dentist.
 4. Try and give up deleterious habits like smoking, pan supari, gutkha. Restrict your intake of colas and carbonated beverages.
 5. Visit your dentist every six months.
 6. Switch over to a new tooth paste after every 3 months.
 7. Avoid using coarse toothpowder. Stick to toothpaste.

Beliefs- unravelling the truth

1. The eye is never affected by any type of treatment done on you teeth including extractions. On the contrary dental infection can be a source of microbes initiating an eye infection.
2. Dental cavities are the consequences of bacterial colonization on your teeth. The acid produced in the bacterial colony is of sufficiently high strength to bore holes. Such a disease is known in scientific terms as Caries. Thus a cavity be known as a carious cavity.
3. Scaling never leads to teeth getting loose or weakened. The bacterial colony as described above persists for days if brushing technique is improper. It absorbs salts from saliva and hardens to be calculus also known as tartar or stone. Scaling every six months prevents calculus build up and keeps gums and teeth healthy.
4. Every teeth has its own colour or shade as we call it. The

shade varies between individuals. Hardly anybody have teeth as white as pearls and snow. It would look totally unnatural. Trying to achieve this means through dental treatment in unsolicited.

Who are the dental surgeons?

To guarantee accurate treatment you must be sure of the authenticity of your dentist. That can be easily done if you know of the degree a dentist should possess. Avoid unscrupulous quack doctors.

Equivalent to the degree of MBBS is the bachelor degree in dentistry is known as BDS (Bachelor degree of Dental Surgery). The master degree in dentistry is known as MDS which is the specialization done in various disciplines within dentistry itself.

A brief overview of the various disciplines –

1. Orthodontia – concerned with correction of crooked and misaligned teeth to produce a harmonious smile.
2. Conservative dentistry and endodontics – saving tooth from extraction and its preservation through (root canal treatment) apicectomy. Crown or cap, filling, veneering laminates, bleaching etc.
3. Prosthodontia – the making of artificial teeth (dentures) fixed bridge, crown or cap, removal dentures, complete dentures (dentures for both toothless upper and lower jaw), laminate veneers, artificial facial parts etc, are among the few of its spectrum of reconstructive work.
4. Oral and maxillofacial surgery – other than tooth extraction this discipline encompasses surgery of the face and jaws, fixing of jaw fractures, removal of cyst and tumour etc. And surgical reconstructions.
5. Pedodontia – this comprises a special branch of dentistry dealing specially with baby and child teeth. That's real gentle dental care!

6. Periodontia – a discipline devoted to the diagnosis, Treatment and prevention of germ disease to ensure long service life for a teeth.
7. Oral medicine and diagnosis – diagnosing disease of the oral cavity.
8. Oral pathology – the discipline that welds the microscope and makes the all important diagnosis for cyst, tumour and cancer and makes the treatment plan.

M.D.S. degree is awarded separately for each of the above disciplines. Remember to approach each specialist for your very special needs, for e.g. an endodontist should be preferred for an RCT, a prosthodontist for your bridges and dentures.

N.B.- BDAS, BMS, DMS, MBS, BDSA etc degrees which many quacks have are not recognized as medical or dental degrees by the Govt. of India medical and dental council. Ask for the registration number when in doubt. You can run a search in the dental council website.

The story of tooth eruption – from milk teeth to wisdom

The first among the 20 baby teeth to come out (erupt) are the front teeth (incisors) at the age of six months. The last of the milk teeth erupts at 2 yrs of age. At the age of six years

The first of the adult teeth (permanent teeth) erupts through the gum behind the last of the milk tooth from the four corners of the mouth. It's important that these permanent teeth should not be confused with milk teeth. Neglecting their care would lead in untimely loss and an irreparable damage to the setting and arrangement of other subsequently erupting teeth. At the same time of about six years of age a child loses his/her front milk teeth to be replaced by permanent ones. Gradually by the age of 12 years 20 of the milk teeth are shed and permanent ones take their place. So now we have a total of

24 teeth. Other than these more teeth erupt in the mouth right behind the last tooth in all four corners taking the count to 28. The last teeth to erupt are the wisdom teeth fails to erupt or erupts only partially giving rise to pain with or without infection. A surgical extraction is the only way of relief from such a situation.

Can teeth cause cancer?

A sharp or broken teeth when retained in mouth for long can be a source of constant injury to the very soft tissues of tongues and cheek and can definitely lead to a cancerous growth. It may thus be deemed mandatory to have any such teeth treated at the earliest.

Do's and Don'ts

1. Never take medicines without consulting your dentist and of your own accord.
2. In case of toothache do not apply hot compress on your face or tie a tight bandage around it with a cloth.
3. Remember to tell your dentist if you have diabetes like "extract my teeth today itself". Taking of medicines as prescribed and sticking to the schedule is the key to successful remission of your problem.

A look into the basic structural architecture of a tooth.

The portion of the tooth that lie in the gums is known as the root. The visible portion gets technically named the crown. The walls of the shell has two layers derived from calcium. The outer layer is the enamel and the inner is named the dentin. Within the shell of enamel and dentin lies the soft jelly like pulp. The pulp is made up of tissues, blood vessels, nerves.

A few of the common dental disease and their treatment protocol

- 1. The carious cavity** – there are innumerable microorganisms that reside in our mouth. They are invisible to the naked eye, but their reproductive rate is phenomenal producing colonies upon colonies of microbes. Small particles of food lodge between and within teeth when we eat. These food particles are used up as nutrition by the microbes living in the colonies which corrodes the tooth enamel (the hard outer covering), giving rise to cavities. Cavities are termed scientifically as “caries”. A tooth is like a hollow cylinder consisting of nerves and veins collectively known as pulp enclosed within the hard enamel and dentin. The cavity formed in enamel eventually spreads deep through dentin to reach the pulp. A severe pain ensues with bacterial invasion of the pulp. Consequently there is an infection leading to pus formation and collection within the tooth. This phenomena is known as abscess formation. As long as the depth of the carious cavity is limited to hard tissue like dentin. The disease process can be stopped and damaged tooth structure restored by a process called “filling”. Thus the tooth is salvaged. Infection of the soft pulp in deep cavities leads to severe pain making fillings ineffective. The only options available are either extraction (removal of tooth) or an RCT to save the tooth in a painless state.
- 2. Hypersensitivity of teeth** – if your teeth hurts or becomes sensitive to hot and cold food, consult your dentist. This condition results due to wearing away of enamel. Various medicated toothpaste are available for the milder form of the disease while more severe condition may require a GIC filling for a permanent

remission.

3. **Carious cavity and filling** – the most obvious signs of caries visible to you are the presence of a definite cavity, brown stains and black stains. A filling must be done to restore the damaged portion and remove the decayed teeth structure. The filling material can either be silver amalgam or a tooth colour restorative.
4. **Pyorrhea (gingivitis and periodontitis) and Scaling** – dental stone or tartar (scientifically known as calculus) deposits form at the junction of teeth and gums giving rise to a disease known commonly as pyorrhoea. This disease is characterized by Bad breadth, bleeding gums, pain and sensitivity. The treatment involves a procedure known as scaling. In this simple and relatively painless procedure the calculus deposits are removed every six months to 1 year. Continuous untreated deposition of calculus leads to pyorrhea, scientifically known as gingivitis. Gingivitis is a bacterial infection of the gums aided mainly by calculus. The gingivitis shall eventually evolve into periodontitis which is a more severe form of the disease involving the tooth root and bone. The fate of such teeth is an ever increasing mobility and pain and eventual shedding. Ultrasonic scaling is a modern procedure adopted to remove heavy deposits of calculus. Scaling is a painless procedure and requires 1 to 3 sitting to perform. This treatment not only ensures a disease free gum but also gives your teeth a long life. A prevalent wrong notion about scaling is that it leads to opening of gaps between teeth and causes tooth mobility, which certainly is wrong to assume.
5. **R.C.T. (ROOT Canal Treatment)** – caries penetrates through enamel and dentin to reach the pulp. The infection produced requires either an extraction or the

revolutionary procedure of an RCT procedure. The infected or dead nerve tissue is gently removed using precision instruments and medicated dressings are applied to heal the tooth. After healing the tooth is filling up with a special filling material all along its root. Thus the tooth stays in a painless state and can become functional again.

6. **Artificial crown** – the procedure involving the fabrication of a covering or cap for the visible portion of a tooth in the mouth. A carious infection and an RCT make fabrication of an artificial crown mandatory.
7. **Removable dentures and fixed dentures** – among the two types of dentures those that could be easily removed and worn by the wearer are known as removable dentures. The ones that are fixed in the mouth permanently are known as bridges.
8. **Uneven akward set teeth** – are corrected by orthodontic treatment, a speciality that has evolved to be ultra modern. A mention of few other state of the art treatment procedures are bleaching and veneering, implant dentistry. Globalization meant that we could bring such treatment to our patients in West Bengal at competitive prices.
9. **Yellowing of teeth and black spots on teeth** – a teeth may undergo an ugly colour change becoming either yellowish or taking up a blackish hue. This may happen as an aftermath of traumatic accident or a carious infection of the tooth. It is possible to restore a tooth to its previous state by a tooth coloured filling or cosmetic filling which is also known scientifically as light cure filling. Dentistry does pride itself in having the capacity in returning your million dollar smile which is so precious to you.

10. **Veneering or ceramic laminates** – procedure involves restoring tooth to its original colour and shape through alteration of only the outer surface of the tooth.
11. **Bleaching** – procedure aimed at removal of unnatural yellow and brown stains from teeth and whitening it.
12. **Implant dentistry** – the THIRD DENTITION. Insertion of an artificial tooth directly into bone to replace the extracted tooth. This dream procedure is now a reality thanks to scientific research work. Once inserted the artificial teeth (implant) forms a part of your system and functions as your own natural tooth. Thus it is a step ahead of dentures and bridges.

Personal dental care – Do's :

1. Brush every morning and after dinner.
2. Eat lots of green leafy vegetables and salads.
3. Try to know the proper brushing technique from your dentist.
4. Always use a toothpaste along with the brush. Your brushing technique is far more important than the brand of toothpaste you use in ensuring prevention of caries and gum disease.
5. Visit your dentist every three month for your dental check up.
6. Please do not be apprehensive of dental treatment. Consult only qualified doctors about your treatment needs. Dental treatment does not affect your eyes.

Personal dental care – Don'ts :

1. It is not advisable to take any food after brushing at night.
2. Cut down on junk food (excessively sweetened snacks, carbonated beverages).
3. A wrong brushing technique can harm your gums.

4. Tooth powder does more harm than good. Do not use tooth powder or other similar cleaning material.
5. Do not neglect your dental disease. A minor ailment can flare out of proportions.

The influence of dental health on general physical and mental health

Many of us neglect our dental health and take dental health for granted until it's too late. A sudden toothache cancels all your appointments for the day. A slow gnawing pain would irritate you thus affecting your mental health. This condition could even last for years. The teeth are an integral part of our smile. They make the smile with the lips in harmony. But that is half the story. The teeth act as crushers of food. Without them eating would not be a pleasure. A less than adequately chewed food leads to indigestion. Many general diseases have an influence on the gums. The best examples being high blood sugar or diabetes patients have an increased tendency of having gum disease as well. The best thing to do in such a condition would be to control the diabetes with proper medicines. A high blood pressure can lead to prolonged and persistent bleeding after tooth extraction. A control of blood pressure within amiable limits becomes all the more necessary.

