

DENTAL PROPHYLAXIS IN CHILDREN.*

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Prophylaxis is the art of preserving from, or preventing, diseases. It is not a curative, but a preventive, process.

From a dental standpoint, Prophylaxis is considered an elementary operation, and is necessarily so because it is the first operation when patients place themselves under our care for treatment—the alleviation of pain only being excepted. It is important to make this a very thorough operation.

Caries or decay is the result of non-prophylactic measures. It is caused by the formation of gelatinous plaques on the surfaces of the teeth. These plaques protect the bacteria and enable them to dissolve out the lime salts between the enamel rods of the tooth and finally break down the enamel rods themselves, producing cavities.

The first requisite to prevention is a healthy, perfectly formed organ, one which has all the virtues of good articulation, ample blood supply and normal environment. Too little attention has been given to the early habits of mastication as well as the character of food which the children receive from the age when permanent molars begin to erupt. There can be no development without a proper and adequate blood supply. This cannot be had without proper exercise, and this exercise will not be had until the children are taught to thoroughly masticate good hard foods instead of the soft preparations usually offered them.

The immediate effect of such exercise is to increase the circulation in all the surrounding tissues, insuring a better growth, a more resisting organ, and a healthier action of the salivary and mucous glands. The ordinary diet contains a sufficient amount of calcium salts and other ingredients to form a perfect set of teeth if it could only be properly placed, but how can the child masticate its food if the deciduous teeth are defective. Not only are they unable to do so, but habits are being formed which cling to them long after the loss of the deciduous teeth. This constitutes a demand for more careful attention to children's teeth.

All investigations point to vitiated oral secretions as a prime

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