

way directly into the circulation with disastrous results. The blood itself may become diseased or bacteria and toxins carried to distant points in the body result in pathological conditions perhaps in the heart, in the glands, in the joints or in other tissues. Such infections are extremely dangerous.

How then are we to counteract the factors which make for disease both in and beyond the mouth? Obviously through oral hygiene. All putrid, ill-smelling food debris should be removed and bacterial growth in the mouth must be kept rigidly under control either through the removal of the organisms by mechanical means or by upsetting the nicety of balance of the components that make the mouth such a perfect incubator. The first method is direct but experience would seem to indicate that perfect removal is impossible. The second method aims at prevention of growth and is also never entirely successful. As has been stated, bacteria can thrive only when the temperature and the supply of assimilable materials are suitable. Thus the whole proposition in oral hygiene is the development of some satisfactory means whereby unnecessary and harmful products in the mouth may be removed. And this brings us to the tooth brush and how and when to use it.

In caring for the mouth the vital point is to get all the surfaces of the teeth clean. This is by no means easy particularly where the more inaccessible ones are concerned. But one thing is certain—the condition of the teeth and of the health in general will vary in direct ratio with the thoroughness of the cleansing, taking for granted, of course, that the individual is normal in other respects. Tooth brushes with three or four rows of bristles widely spaced—such as the “Hutax”—should be used. A tooth paste or powder—or in their absence a large pinch of salt in a glass of water is necessary as a cleansing agent. The teeth should be divided into groups and each group cleansed separately. First, the outer surfaces of the upper teeth, then the inner and lastly the grinding surfaces. Beginning with the molars the brush should be placed flat against the gums with the bristles uppermost, then by a turn of the wrist the brush is rotated in a semi circle downwards thus massaging the gums and cleansing the tooth surfaces while at the same time some of the bristles find their way into the interdental spaces, sweeping them clear of debris. This movement should be repeated at least ten times before going to the next section. At each change the brush should be rinsed and more paste or powder added. After the outer and inner surfaces have been completed the grooves and cusps should be scrubbed with a fore and aft movement after which the lower

teeth should come in for a like share of attention—with the bristles of the brush reversed of course. A mouthful of water or saline solution should then be taken and pumped between the teeth by the cheeks. The brush should then be thoroughly washed and afterwards plunged into a glass half filled with table salt.

Proper oral hygiene is thus a matter of minutes and not of seconds. When should this dental toilet be undertaken? There is no difference of opinion among the authorities that just before retiring is the most important time. Owing to inactivity of the mouth during the period of rest, bacterial growth is much more abundant, particularly when conditions are favorable. The mouth should therefore be made scrupulously clean before retiring. Cleansing the teeth after meals is also recommended. My personal opinion is that cleansing before meals is better since one's mouth should be clean before taking food rather than after. Setting all argument aside, however, we are agreed on two things, viz., that the teeth must be preserved so that mastication may be properly carried out, and that properly selected clean food must pass through a clean oral cavity in order to arrive in the stomach in a clean state.

The importance of a good set of teeth can scarcely be overestimated, and everyone from earliest childhood should be made familiar with the factors that are responsible for their premature loss or decay and how to avoid these causes. Oral hygiene should be taught and insisted upon from the age of three years up thus ensuring good teeth and healthy mouths to the majority of adults.

It is believed, by most of the experts that one of the biggest advances in public health will come through carefully taught oral hygiene. Now a start has to be made at some point and this should be with the youngest pupils in the public schools—preferably in grades one and two. In the more advanced grades usually more or less damage has been done and relief can only be found in reparative work. But even here thorough training is advantageous because we must remember that the really tangible results lie in the future with the generations yet to come. With them intelligent care from the beginning of dentition will be a matter of routine. To the teacher is presented a wonderful opportunity to help build up better health for the nation and it almost seems to me that Doctor Osler should have addressed his remarks to the teachers as well as to the dental fraternity when he said—“You have one gospel to preach, in season and out of season, early and late, and that is the gospel of oral hygiene. There is nothing in the whole range of hygiene so important as that.”