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# Dents on oral hygiene

by P. Downing & B. Stackhouse

The purpose of most 'over the counter' dental health aids is to remove plaque from teeth. Plaque is responsible for such things as tooth decay, bad breath (and even loss of sex appeal). Here is a description of some of the dental aids available, what they do, what they don't do, which ones are good and which ones are potentially harmful. Once you know a few basic facts, common sense will allow you to pick out those that may cause problems.

**Toothbrushes:** Probably the first thing people think of when it comes to dental health is a toothbrush. They are used only for cleaning the exposed surfaces of teeth and gums. Cleaning between teeth must be done with other aids.

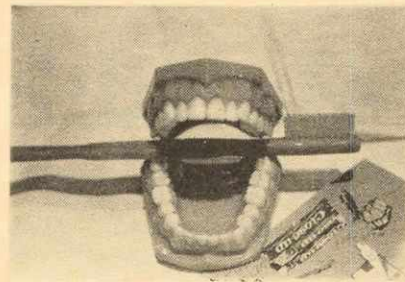
What makes a good toothbrush? It may sound like a stupid question but there are some important things to consider when choosing one. It should have a straight handle for ease of manipulation, the handle should be rounded and smooth with no plastic edges that may irritate or cut your gums. (some toothbrushes do). The bristles should be soft with rounded ends. Stiff pointed bristles would, again, result in gum irritation. The brushing surface should be flat and not serrated for more efficient plaque removal (i.e. all bristles cut the same length). People with small mouths (especially children) should use a brush with a smaller head, because if the brush won't fit in your mouth you will not be able to clean properly.

With normal brushing a toothbrush will be worn out after about three months and should be replaced. The bristles will be bent out of shape, again resulting in improper cleaning.

Four brands that meet these requirements are Lactona multi-tuft, Py-Co-Pay, Oral B-3 and G.U.M. by Butler.

Clasp and denture brushes are available. They have stiff bristles and are designed especially to clean clasps on partial or full dentures. **Dentifrices** - (toothpastes, powders and liquids). The basic ingredients of dentifrices are: an abrasive which scrapes the plaque off teeth, a foaming agent which acts as a detergent and a flavouring agent to mask the taste of the other ingredients.

Dentifrices are designed to clean accessible surfaces of teeth when used with a toothbrush. They also polish teeth and mask mouth odors. Toothpastes are often used as a vehicle for fluoride which strengthens tooth structure, preventing decay. Fluoride can be present in toothpastes in an active or inactive state, (the latter being essentially



The Dalhousie Student Union is currently exploring the possibility of a dentifrice program; in the meantime you are urged to follow the advice in the accompanying article. Dal Photo / Walsh

useless). Those brands recommended by the Canadian Dental Association have active (effective) forms of fluoride.

For heavy smokers or coffee drinkers there are special toothpastes and powders available to remove stains from teeth. Care should be taken in their use since they are very abrasive and can wear down tooth structure. For this reason your dentist should be consulted about their use.

Liquid dentifrices are available in Europe but not in Nova Scotia because of their high alcohol content (24%).

**Floss.** Dental floss is a string-like material made of synthetic fibre, used to clean the surfaces between teeth. Toothbrushes clean the outer surfaces of teeth but there is no way that a toothbrush will fit into the small spaces between teeth.

There are two types of dental floss, waxed and unwaxed. In most cases the unwaxed floss is more desirable. However there are some situations where waxed floss is

needed. Most brands of dental floss now marketed are satisfactory. Instructions for its use can usually be found on the package.

Floss threaders are available which function like needle threaders to thread the dental floss into difficult areas. Another floss aid available is a plastic handle device designed to hold dental floss for people who cannot manipulate it properly - such as young children.

**Disclosing tablets.** Disclosing tablets (or wafers) are simply a harmless food dye. They are used to show where plaque has been removed from teeth. Again, most brands are satisfactory.

**Pacifiers and Teething Rings.** If you have a baby and decide that he or she needs a pacifier or teething ring, care must be taken in their selection. A pacifier should be of one piece moulded rubber with a mouth shield and short nipple. A two-piece pacifier may fall apart and be swallowed and a long nipple could cause gagging.

Teething rings should be large and hard rubber or plastic to prevent the child from biting a piece off and swallowing it. They should not be fluid filled as the baby could puncture them.

Most of these aids can be found at drugstores. Any dentist or dental hygienist can further explain the use of these aids.

It is important for the public to realize that dental aids must be chosen with care since some may possibly cause harm through their improper design or use. However, regular use of the proper dental aids will result in good oral health.

*Cont'd from page 3*

the Maritime climate over time. 18,000 years ago, much of North America, with the possible exception of the Magdalen Islands and the Cape Breton Highlands was buried under thick glacial ice. 4,000 years later, much of the ice had disappeared from Eastern North America. At this time the sea level of the North Atlantic was perhaps 100 meters lower than its present level. Land was being exposed, but it was suitable only for wild game and not for agricultural use. The land was hospitable enough to support an Indian settlement near DeBert, 10,500 years ago. 500 years later, the ocean was warming and water levels were approaching the levels of Today. However, such natural phenomenon as the Fundy tides were not yet as pronounced.

One of the main points of Doctor Ogden's lecture was that more drastic climatic changes occurred in recent history as opposed to the relatively slow changes which took place in the distant past. Based on a series of pollen samples from mid-United States lakes, it has been determined that the predominant species of trees which distinguish types of forest change with climatic changes.

During a little Ice Age in the 1700's glaciers, in for example Norway, advanced to an extent not surpassing any advance in the previous history, (except the massive glacial advances of the First Ice Age). The ice advances halted by the early 1800's.

Precipitation records kept in the maritime region show that precipi-

tation has gradually increased over the last 70 years; this trend has occurred all over Canada (except the Prairies). A decrease in temperature has been shown to occur in all areas over the past 50 years. Also increased cloudiness, which causes lessened radiant energy to the earth; lessening heat flow to the earth. These environmental factors have contributed to a general cooling trend in the Atlantic area.

Dr. Ogden acknowledged the presence of the celebrated greenhouse, effect (over simplified) the warming effect that increases CO2 in the atmosphere. It has been suggested that a doubling of the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere would cause a world wide temperature increase of 4 degrees Celsius—, melting the Polar Ice Cap and covering most of the earth's surface with water. However, as Ogden was quick to indicate, the greenhouse effect is being counter balanced (and perhaps outweighed) by the increase of particulate matter in the atmosphere. Increased particulate fallout is caused by heavy industry.

These factors are acting against each other, and it is impossible to determine which effect will outweigh the other.

Although the results are not yet in, Dr. Ogden urged for a continued search that will show a definite trend. Planning for the future (when the outcome is unknown) cannot be overlooked. A changing climate would have great effects on such areas as food production. To overlook the consequences of a changing climate in a world plagued by energy shortages, Dr. Ogden said, would be fatal folly.

The interest lecture was attended by approximately 250 people. Although he did not give any clear answers as to what will happen to our climate, Ogden did point out interesting phenomena which display climate change.

**"Superb!"**

— Jay Cocks,  
Time

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