

THE HYGIENIC MEANS OF PRESERVING THE TEETH.

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The teeth are a set of organs which are often neglected, that is, the proper hygienic means for their preservation is not known by patients, or if instructed by their dental attendant, they refuse or neglect to perform the duties necessarily attending such advice. We all know by the least experience and practice that the ravaging influence of decay cannot be counteracted altogether, but it can to a certain degree. The dental tissues belong to that class of tissues of the human organism which have not the power of recuperation.

Caries dentium is the most ravaging disease by which the dental structures are attacked, and is a mortification of the dentinal fibrillæ and a decomposition of the dentinal salts, induced by chemical action; its causes may be divided into, predisposing and exciting. The predisposing causes are, the relation of the teeth to each other, their malformation being incidental upon the diseases of dentition and infancy, thereby preventing a sufficient deposition of calcareous salts, involving an improper fusion of the enamel at the points of junction, and as a consequence producing an abnormal formation of the organs, the dentine being in that manner exposed to the action of deleterious agents. The exciting causes are, the action of certain agents forming part of our food upon the dental tissues, changes of temperature, many of the medicines administered for the treatment of disease, especially tonics, which are frequently acids, not only acting upon the dentine but also on the enamel; all diseases, constitutional as well as local, affecting the salivary secretions.

Acids, both vegetable and mineral, decompose the salts of the enamel as well as those of the dentine. The acid penetrating to the dentine from a defect in the formation of the enamel, as before stated, or a small crevice caused, perhaps, by the biting of hard substances, (which should be avoided as one of the necessary means of dental preservation,) or by thermal changes, the dentine having thereby become exposed; in that manner the foundation of a cavity is laid, and albuminose as well as vegetable and other substances lodging in those crevices or depressions, and there fermentation occurs, the same action being communicated to the surrounding tissue, its very decay generating an acid, the consequence being that we often discover large cavities with small orifices. Those acids chiefly used as articles of food are, viz.: acetic, (vinegar), citric, malic and tartaric.