

## Keeping the Mouth Clean

The Nearer We Come to Perfect Cleanliness the Better off We Are for Saving Teeth

(By a Prominent Specialist)

THE belief that when natural teeth are lost, artificial ones will be just as good is all wrong, because plates only have one-tenth the power of natural teeth to chew food and prepare it for digestion. Do not wait for the condition of the mouth to become so bad that you must wear a plate, because broken down teeth and roots and the deposits all around them, which lodge millions of disease germs, are multiplying, making every swallow going down the stomach from such a mouth a source of poison to the system, instead of being healthful food.

The only safe way is to always keep a clean mouth, and the nearer we come to perfect cleanliness, the better off we are both for our health and for saving our teeth.

Very few people keep their mouths clean enough, because very few people know the value of it, and how to do it. Every time a person with a full mouth of germs talks, coughs or sneezes, they are throwing out poison to harm other people, and it is only those who have clean, well polished and healthy gums that have a good chance of escaping it. Of course, even after the germs enter the mouth they do not always develop throughout the body, because the conditions of the blood may not be favorable to them, but it is certainly wrong to run such dreadful chances when the danger can be so easily lessened by keeping a clean mouth. Those who have learned by experience the value of a pure, clean mouth, both for comfort and health, fully appreciate it, and when that knowledge and experience spreads throughout the world, diseases will be lessened in proportion.

The mouth which seldom gets cleaned will usually be full of decayed teeth with disease germs in them, will have pieces of roots in, and quantities of deposits about the teeth, the germs from all of which make more and more damage in the mouth itself besides poisoning its owner and his neighbors. The mouth which gets an occasional cleansing escapes a condition quite as bad, but it is a close second to it. It is only the mouth which gets cleaned often enough, and which is cleaned in an intelligent way, which becomes a pure, healthful mouth, capable of preserving the teeth of its owner, protecting his health, and not threatening that of his neighbors.

OF all the factors which contribute to the uncleanliness of the mouth, the most common and probably the most disastrous in its influence upon the hygiene of the mouth, is decay of the teeth. This is a disease brought about through the agency of germs which possess the property of converting starchy foods, sugar, etc., into acids. It is these acids which slowly dissolve out the inorganic portion of the enamel, after which it is only a question of time, unless cared for, when the pulp or nerve of the tooth becomes involved, followed by pain, death of the pulp and ultimate loss of the tooth. The rapidity with which this is accomplished will depend largely upon the cleanliness or uncleanliness of the mouth, and the resistance which the teeth or body as a whole, offer to the agents of decay. As a rule, the process is a comparatively slow one. An aching tooth does not spring into being in a day, and means nothing less than negligence long continued.

While decay of the teeth is not limited to any age, it is, nevertheless, most common in childhood, its most active period being the ages of six and twenty. Because it makes its appearance so early in life, the temporary teeth are often involved, especially the molars, which are too often regarded by the parent as of little value because they are temporary teeth. Let it be said with all possible emphasis that no greater mistake could be made, for the decay of these teeth means not only an unclean and diseased mouth at a critical period in the life of the child, but it means inevitable irregularity of the permanent teeth. Every effort should therefore be made to preserve these teeth against decay, because more than half of them should remain in the mouth until the child is twelve years of age. This should be done not only to insure against pain and uncleanliness, but for the purpose of providing the developing child with an efficient masticating apparatus. Decaying teeth render thorough mastication impossible and establish early in life the habit of bolting the food. Moreover, the filth which is inseparable from decaying teeth is mixed with the food and carried into the stomach as a further tax upon the digestive apparatus. In a word, decaying teeth, especially in the mouth of a child, mean poor nutrition, which in turn means poor health and a low order of efficiency.



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