



Dental Care

GUIDE

Caring for Children's Teeth

Educating your children about good oral care will promote a healthy mouth as they age. Get your child to learn good habits and teach them how to properly brush and floss. This could help them avoid costly dentist bills in the future.

The American Dental Association recommends a first visit to the dentist as soon as the first tooth comes in and no later than 1 year old. This early exam can give your dentist an opportunity to identify tooth decay and discuss bad habits that may promote decay.

BABY TEETH

Your child's first set of teeth are nearly completely formed at birth. According to the ADA, your child's teeth will typically begin showing around the six-month mark. Taking great care of these baby teeth is very important in the health of permanent teeth. Properly maintained baby teeth can help permanent teeth grow in straight.

Baby teeth should be cleaned every day. They should be wiped down with a wet washcloth as they begin to show. Once the teeth become bigger and stronger, you will be able to use a child's toothbrush.

BAD HABITS

You can help your baby avoid learning bad habits by discouraging thumb sucking, sleeping with a bottle or excessive use of a pacifier. All of these habits can lead to serious dental trouble if performed after permanent teeth have set in.

Constant sucking can cause

problems with the growth of your child's mouth and the alignment of his teeth. It's best to break these habits long before his permanent teeth grow in and avoid these unnecessary risks.

TOOTHPASTE AND FLOSS

Once your child is over 3 years old, the ADA recommends the regular use of children's fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride is an active cavity fighter and can strengthen

developing tooth enamel.

You should apply no more than a pea-sized drop of toothpaste to your child's toothbrush. Your child should brush their teeth no less than twice a day for two minutes each time.

The ADA also recommends flossing as soon as your child's teeth are touching. When looking for tooth-care products for your child, look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance stamped on the package



Sensitive Teeth

Sensitive teeth are not only inconvenient during warm or cold meals, they can also be an indicator of tooth decay, worn enamel or even exposed tooth roots. If you are experiencing pain while eating or drinking, your sensitive teeth may be the problem.

Your first step of defense against sensitive teeth starts in your dentist's office. There, your dental professional can determine what is causing the sensitivity and how it can be treated.

YOUR MOUTH'S PROTECTIVE LAYERS

The good news about sensitive teeth is that they usually can be completely avoided. By understanding how sensitivity occurs, you can have an edge on preventing it.

The crowns of your teeth are protected by a layer of enamel. This enamel is actually the strongest substance in a human body. Underneath the enamel there is another layer of a substance called cementum. This protects the tooth root under the gum line.

Beneath both of these substances is dentin. It contains small hollow tubes. Once the dentin loses its protective qualities, these tubes allow heat and cold in to irritate your teeth's nerves.

PREVENTION

There are several ways you can prevent enduring the pain that is caused by sensitive teeth. The American Dental Association has suggested the following tips in avoiding sensitive teeth before the condition begins:

- **Brush gently.** Aggressive brushing is a common cause of sensitivity in your teeth. Brushing without care can weaken enamel making your teeth more prone to cavities.
- **Avoid acidic foods.** Eating or drinking products that are high in acidic content can also soften your enamel. Avoid carbonated drinks, cit-



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rus fruits and even yogurt.

- **Wait to brush.** Don't brush your teeth immediately after ingesting acidic substances. Brushing with these sticky acids on your teeth can cause erosion to the enamel. Instead, rinse your mouth with warm water before you brush.

TREATMENTS

You can ask your dentist how you can get the proper treatment for sensitivity during a regular check-up. The seriousness of these treatments can vary depending on the overall state of your oral health.

A few of the easier remedies you may

try first are as easy as using a desensitizing toothpaste or applying fluoride. The toothpaste can sometimes block the pain of sensitive teeth, whereas, a layer of fluoride may actually strengthen your enamel and also reduce pain. More serious methods include a root canal or a surgical gum graft.

Abscessed Tooth

An abscessed tooth can be a painful infection that, in extreme cases, actually has fatal results. An abscess is most often caused by tooth decay but also can be caused by trauma or gum disease.



If you are concerned you're dealing with an abscessed tooth, schedule an appointment with an endodontist immediately.

These professionals can do a series of simple tests to diagnose an abscess. These tests include tapping a medical instrument against your tooth, checking for increased pain. An X-ray may be required to check for erosion of the bone around the infected area.

HOW TO TELL IF YOU HAVE AN ABSCESS

A throbbing toothache that continues through doses of pain reliever medicine can be a common symptom of an abscess. Other symptoms may include:

- A bitter taste in your mouth;
- Fever;
- Sensitive teeth; and
- Swelling in jaws.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, you may benefit from scheduling a dental exam. Professionals in oral care have many ways to relieve your mouth of the abscess and prevent more serious conditions from occurring.

TREATMENTS FOR AN ABSCESS

If your oral professional has deemed that you, in fact, have an abscess there are a few plans they will likely recommend. The first step to cure an abscess is to eliminate the infection. This can be achieved by draining the infection or with antibiotics.

After the infection has subsided, your specialist may choose to perform a root canal. According to the American Association of Endodontists, root canal treatment is intended to remove infected pulp that develops in a tooth. This infection causes an abscess. Aside from a root canal, another method of treatment is to fully extract the infected tooth.

DANGERS OF AN ABSCESS

It is unlikely that an abscess can go untreated due to the extreme pain and discomfort it will cause. However, it is important to know the risks of an untreated abscess and how it can damage your overall health.

An infection due to an abscess can sometimes spread to the brain causing a brain abscess. This type of infection can cause comas in severe cases. Abscessed teeth also are prone to spreading infection upward and causing a sinus infection. It is critical that you seek treatment at the first sign of this serious oral condition.

Wisdom Teeth

During your late teens to your early twenties, you may notice a new set of teeth erupting through your gums. These teeth are known as wisdom teeth and may cause extreme discomfort if there is not room to grow amongst your existing permanent teeth.

Wisdom teeth are believed to have been necessary for our ancestors to chew coarser food than typically exists today. Today, wisdom teeth are sometimes treated as a painful nuisance which requires a simple surgery to remove.

DO YOU HAVE TO REMOVE WISDOM TEETH?

You may grow your wisdom teeth without any discomfort. This depends on the amount of room you have around your existing teeth. It is important to discuss your decision to keep your wisdom teeth with your dentist as they can cause problems down the road.

Your wisdom teeth will need to be removed if there is any evidence of infection, tumors or damage to neighboring teeth. Your dentist may request an X-ray to ensure your wisdom teeth are not causing any damage.

EXTRACTION PROCESS

The process of extracting wisdom teeth is usually completed during one or two visits to a dentist or surgeon. If the tooth is showing signs of infection, your specialist may choose to fight the infection with antibiotics before surgery.

Once the day comes for surgery, you can expect to be



given a general anesthetic. This will prevent pain to your body and allow you to sleep throughout the surgery. Ask your doctor about eating or drinking before surgery. Some may recommend skipping food and drinks for a short period before the procedure.

The actual surgery will consist of your dentist opening your gum tissue resting over the wisdom tooth to remove any bone that is causing obstruction. They will then separate the tissue that connects to the bone and remove the tooth.

RECOVERY

Follow your dentist's specific instructions after a wisdom tooth extraction. Not following these instructions may cause you to need another visit for further treatment.

Some common rules your dentist will ask you to follow:

- Biting gently on a gauze pad and changing it periodically;
- Avoiding physical activity, as this may promote bleeding; and
- Sticking with soft foods such as soups or pudding until your stitches dissolve.