

The most common of the many diseases of teeth is dental caries or decay. The beginning of this trouble is due to improper care of the mouth. The decay is caused directly by the acids produced by bacteria. Particles of food left between the teeth soon become full of the bacteria that cause fermentation and putrefaction.

The rate of acid formation depends in a measure upon the nature of the food particles left on the teeth, the starchy foods more readily fermenting and producing the enamel-destroying acids. Once the enamel is softened and split up the softer dentine decays rapidly and the nerve is exposed, causing the tooth to ache.

The prevention of this and nearly all teeth troubles is cleanliness. A clean mouth is a healthy mouth and clean teeth do not decay. The care of the teeth should begin as soon as teeth appear, as it is in childhood that nearly all the troubles begin. It is well said that if we have good teeth at twenty we will have good teeth at sixty. Special attention should be given to the six year, or first molars, as they are very subject to decay and are usually mistaken for temporary teeth. Preventative treatment during childhood will insure good teeth to a large majority of adults. A small sum spent this way saves many dollars later. The amount in the belated treatment of one tooth would have preserved in good condition the teeth of an entire family. Decay in one tooth tends to spread to the adjacent teeth. Many parents, unfortunately, do not examine, or have examined, the teeth of their children until the pain from decay calls their attention to the condition.

To clean the teeth properly a good brush, some thread or dental silk, and plenty of pure water are needed. Tooth powders and pastes may be necessary sometimes to keep the teeth bright and clean, but when the teeth are habitually brushed three times a day are seldom needed. Too little attention is given to the proper manners of using the brush—the brushing being done in a careless and therefore inefficient way. In using the brush the teeth should be brushed cross-wise and up and down—that is, in the direction of the long axis of the teeth and all the exposed surfaces should be brushed.

The dental silk should be used in cleansing the spaces between the teeth of food particles; quill picks are also useful for this purpose. Tooth brush drills should be given by those who have charge of the children and the proper way to cleanse the teeth taught. Although the most important object in having clean teeth is to assist in keeping the body free of disease the beautiful appearance of clean bright teeth stimulates the children to keep theirs in like condition.