

## Geriatric Dentistry

Lecture by

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Every time a Question comes into our mind that how can our teeth stay with us throughout our life? The answer is simple that if we take care of our teeth our teeth can be with us forever. Today we will talk about how we can keep our teeth for life long?

I am Dr. Adnan Sukkur Walla. I am from Dow university of Health Sciences. I am from the dentistry department which provides awareness to the people regarding maintenance of oral hygiene and how to take care of our teeth. So we go to different schools colleges, hold seminars and go to the old homes to spread awareness.

The first question which comes to mind is Caries of the tooth. (dant me keera lagna). In real these are bacteria which slowly rot our teeth leading to tiny holes in the teeth. This is a whole process in which food mixed with bacteria produce acid leading to rotting or demineralization of the teeth. This causes hole and pain in the tooth due to infection.

The initial problem is the dental plaque. You will notice hard stone like deposits on the teeth especially on the inner side of the lower teeth. This is so hardened that it is not easily removed with brushing. In such cases you need to visit a dentist for removal of the plaque by scaling. This plaque when not removed leads to bad smell in the mouth and bleeding through the gums. On an X-Ray it is seen that the gums are slowly receding from the teeth causing wide gaps between the teeth. In longstanding unresolved cases the result is loss of a tooth. You must visit your dentist yearly. The procedure for removing the plaque is simple that is SCALING. Get your teeth and gums cleaned with the help of a machine. It is beneficial for long term and you will save your teeth.

In adult teeth the front ones are used for biting during eating. These are called INCISORS. Behind them are the pointed ones called CANINES. These are used for tearing and pulling meat. Behind these are the PRE MOLARS and MOLARS. These are used for chewing, mashing and grinding the food. The incisors are also important for cosmetic reasons.

Sometimes a black hole is seen on the tooth. Previously dental extraction was considered as the sole treatment but now with advancement in care and technology the teeth can be saved. In case of caries; laser or other any types filling can be done restoring the function of the tooth.

In some cases the caries goes deep and affects the nerve of the tooth causing severe pain. The advanced treatment for such case is ROOT CANAL TREATMENT. The nerve supply at the root of the tooth is removed. The tooth remains intact without losing its function while the person is relieved of pain. This procedure saves the natural tooth because artificial tooth cannot replace a natural one.

In extreme cases a tooth cannot be saved due to advanced damage and caries. In this case the dentist would advise for tooth extraction. The damaged tooth in such cases cause problem while eating and lead to swelling and infection. The option is to get the tooth extracted and after some time a new artificial implant can be done.

Always visit a good dentist for extraction of the tooth who uses properly sterilized instruments.

Avoid going to quacks and road side dentists who used unsterilized instruments. These unhygienic practices may increase your risk of getting Hepatitis or AIDS etc.

Once extraction is done and is not replaced by an artificial tooth the problems start to happen as a result be that the teeth start to bend and the upper teeth slowly start to come down, there is problem in chewing. This may lead to weakening of the upper tooth.

Different opting for an artificial tooth:

#### 1. TOOTH BRIDGE

The procedure works by using the healthy teeth on the sides as a support. In this case weight of chewing food is borne by the healthy teeth. The disadvantage for this procedure is that the natural teeth have be grinded for making a bridge. Mostly people prefer to get a tooth bridge.

#### 2. DENTAL IMPLANT

Dentists prefer a dental implant for the patient. A screw is fixed in the place of a missing tooth in the jaw, similar to the implanted natural teeth. It can bear the weight of chewing and can work as a natural tooth. These screws a made of specialized Titanium. In this procedure the grinding of the teeth is not required. The precautions for this procedure is that the blood sugar and blood pressure should be under control and well maintained. If bone is in good condition as seen on the X-Ray this procedure is recommended. One consideration is that implant is more expensive than the tooth bridge.

#### 3. PARTIAL DENTURE

These artificial teeth need to be removed every night and to be worn again every morning. There are more options in partial dentures like, CAST PARTIEL DENTURE, FLEXIBLE PARTIAL

DENTURE, NOVEL DENTURE, and SOFT DENTURE. These options are recommended depending upon the suitability of the person. In case of all teeth missing the option is COMPLETE DENTURE.

#### COMPLETE DENTURE.

This is a complete set of 32 teeth. These are not fixed to the bone but fitted on to the gums. With some practice when a person gets adjusted to these they can easily chew food with these dentures. These dentures need training and technique.

#### PERMANENT BONE LOSS

Many people ask what if we do not get artificial teeth. After missing teeth the person starts to chew food using his gums. In the long run with in 30years the jaw bones start thinning out, become weak and flattened. The jaw and chin recedes leading to change in the shape of the jawline.

#### ALL DENTAL DISEASES CAN BE PREVENTED BY

##### 1. BRUSHING

To brush the teeth properly on each side till the back. Use MEDIUM tooth brush. Avoid using hard tooth brush. For the tooth paste use the special medicated paste for sensitive teeth ONLY when prescribed by the dentist. Otherwise use regular tooth paste. All brands of tooth paste contain FLORIDE which makes the teeth strong.

##### 2. FLOSSING

The tooth brush cannot reach every corner of the teeth. For this case you have to use other aids like FLOSS and INTRADENTAL BRUSHES. Every time when you eat meat you must do floss to keep your intra-dental space clean.

##### 3. MOUTHWASH

Medicated mouth wash may be prescribed by the dentist for daily use. However a regular mouth wash may be used 3 times in a week. Remember that the mouthwash cannot replace brushing! It contains CHLOROHEXIDIENE which prevents the deposition of plaque and keeps the mouth clean.

##### 4. REGULAR DENTAL CHECKUP

Remember to get your dental checkups every year. It saves us from various diseases. The dentist can guide you about any missing technique or do some fillings if needed. These checkups help a lot in prevention and are low cost. Root canal treatment and dental caps are expensive procedures.

#### TIPS TO CARE GIVERS FOR ELDERLY PATIENTS

Getting an elderly to do brushing is a difficult task. The life expectancy is increasing in the world. In an otherwise health elderly person, loss of teeth can lead to other problems with time. So prevention is a must for them.

Brushing is a challenge for the care giver in elderly. If they are having sore gums they might resist. Even in this case front teeth may be cleaned but reaching the hind teeth becomes more difficult. Plaque starts to form when brush does not reach the hind teeth. This leads to soreness and bleeding of

gums and infections. Make sure to clean the pre molars and molars from all sides. Otherwise slowly they will have problem in chewing leading to poor diet.

The saliva also started to decrease in amount with age. Saliva are of two types. 1. Watery Saliva  
2. Mucous Saliva

Watery saliva is drained in the mouth all the times and it protects the mouth. The Mucous saliva and thick and helps in built up of plaque. The medications, chronic diseases and dehydration all lead to reduction in watery saliva. The elderly should have a water bottle with them which they can sip or spray in their mouth. In case of dry mouth the chewing will increase friction slowly leading to ulceration in the mouth and pain. Use saliva substitutes and non-alcoholic mouth washes.

### **Rampant Caries**

This condition appears suddenly and the teeth start to decay and develop caries. With a week of non-brushing suddenly this condition develops. This may be the result of a combination of reasons like dry mouth, medications, poor oral hygiene. Help the person by maintaining good brushing and refer to a dentist.

At places where partial teeth are broken there is inability to chew. Brushing only may not help here so refer them to the dentist for further treatment.

### **Plaque and loosening of teeth**

Plaque leads to swelling of gums and bleeding after brushing. Once the plaque is removed by scaling there will be improvement in chewing and brushing. After scaling gaps between teeth will be there. Use **intra-dental brush** or **air sprays** for them.

### **Denture related Cleaning and injuries**

Denture cleaning is a must to avoid candidiasis (fungal infection). This infection leads to oral ulceration. In this condition use **Nilstat oral drops and mouth wash** to clean the dentures and oral cavity. Avoid using dentures for new days and keep it aside in a clean state.

Fungi are opportunistic infection and can develop where patient is using more antibiotics or is immune suppressant. So the best way is to keep the moth hygiene.

Sometimes a red skin is seen on the gums. Counsel the patient that the dentures may become loose after 2-3 years and needs to be aligned again. In some cases a new denture is required. In some cases dentists my give an **adhesive paste which can keep the denture fixed in the mouth for 8-10 hours.**

For removal of the plaque, **Denture Cleaning Tablets** are available. Put the denture in water and add a tablet in this. The effervescent tablet will soften the plaque to be easily removed with brushing. These tablets have anti-bacterial activity.

The aim is to maintain the strength of the teeth for the elderly. Self-care is a must the other option is care giver help.

Decrease ability to self-care, dry mouth due to medication, more cavities, less chewing, less nutrition and poor health. We need to stop the downward spiral. Keep the nutrition status well balanced. To avoid the decline from chewing diet to pureed or liquid diet.

**Daily oral care starts with**

- Daily brushing
- Treat the underlying cause
- Avoid unnecessary medication
- Manage infections
- Denture hygiene
- Use of intra-dental brush where required
- Uncompromised nutrition

**Specialized fields in dentistry**

General Dentist

Oral dental surgeon (does the extractions)

Periodontist (treats the gum diseases)

Prosthodontist (specialist in implants)

Endodontist (specialist in root canal)

Orthodontist (specialist in teeth alignment)

Pediatric Dentist (for children)

Thank you.