

Your Dental Health

The contents of this series of "Dental Health Talks" was originally prepared by the American Dental Association. They are made available for Tundra Times through the Public Health Education Office of the Alaska Native Health Service.

It is well known that our dental health program in Interior Alaska has not yet reached everyone needing dental services. This is especially true about the people in the rural communities. However, everyone understands how important it is to take care of our teeth which is a part of our total well-being.

Let's start our series by testing ourselves to find out our Dental IQ by taking the following quiz:

No. 1 — A Dental Health Quiz

* * *

How's your dental health IQ? Test yourself on these points:

1. Tooth brushing should be
 - (a) after meals and before bedtime and always after sweet snacks.
 - (b) part of a thorough cleaning a minimum of once a day.
2. Dental floss is most important as
 - (a) an aid in removing food from between teeth.
 - (b) an aid in preventing tooth decay and gum disease.
3. The primary factor in dental decay is
 - (a) sweet foods impacted between teeth.
 - (b) plaque built up on teeth.
4. For most people, the recommended toothbrush should have
 - (a) firm, resilient bristles.
 - (b) soft, end-rounded bristles.
5. The recommended way to brush is
 - (a) down on the upper teeth and up on the lower teeth.
 - (b) with a short, back and forth scrub or vibratory motion.

The best answer to each of the questions, according to the American Dental Association, is letter "b." But don't feel bad if you missed several — the answers considered "best" have changed in recent years.

Advances in dental research have lead to changes in the disease prevention procedures recommended by dentists. Dental science and dental practice are advancing at such a fast pace that it is often difficult for the patient to keep up with the latest information. That's the reason for this new series of columns: to provide you with the latest information about "Your Dental Health."

Teeth have always been one of the major mysteries of life, and there is no phase of tooth development which has not been the subject of endless questions, much misinformation, and even some superstitions. Probably this is because dental disease is as old as mankind.

Ever since the first cavemen developed toothaches, people have been trying to find ways to prevent them. Over the centuries remedies for preventing toothaches have ranged from washing the infant's mouth with holy water to hanging a root of parsley around

YOUR DENTAL HEALTH

(Continued from Page 2)

the child's neck.

It is a long way from parsley roots to space stations, but the men we send into space today still must be concerned with the prevention of the dental diseases that plagued cavemen.

We, as human beings, are orally oriented. We all love food. Talking is our primary means of communication. We show our affection by kissing. We are always concerned about bad breath and how we look when we smile.

Our oral health affects our happiness and our comfort. We annually spend more than half a billion dollars in drug stores and in supermarkets for oral hygiene products. Yet many of us still have a concept of dental care that is closer to the parsley root than it should be.

The purpose of the articles that follow in this series is to help you keep your teeth, your smile, and to attain good oral health for as long as you live. If you care for your teeth properly, you won't ever have to lose them and wear dentures.

(Next article: "Dental Diseases")

If you have any questions please write to:

Public Health Educator
Dental Health Talks
c/o Tundra Times
Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707