

# Essentials of maintaining oral hygiene

The concept of wellbeing of the whole body is more important than ever, and yet, the teeth are not in the priority zone for most people's checklist. A hasty brushing right before going out, and a mouthwash bottle in the office bag are treated as a one-stop solution. But, when a toothache occurs, there is simply no solution but to drop by the dentist as soon as possible for a quick remedy. Yet, simple steps from the very beginning can help to maintain proper oral hygiene without that recurring agony.

Regarding these basics, Dr Raquibul H Rumi, Chairman of Pioneer Dental College and Hospital, and National Convenor of BFDS (Bangladesh Federation of Dental Science) shared his insight on how to make sure to get the most of oral hygiene.

## What are the first steps to oral hygiene?

Before you think oral hygiene, you have to understand the mouth and the teeth first. We have a tendency to treat teeth like a mass of non-living things, sitting inside the mouth and helping us masticate our food. This is where people are wrong. The teeth too, are living elements, and need just as much care as anything in the human body. That being said, the very first step to oral hygiene should be cleaning effectively to get rid of bacteria and any kind of build-up. It's not just the teeth, the tongue and the gums need care as well. Cleaning the teeth and the oral cavity are just the start of maintaining proper oral hygiene.

## Is brushing teeth twice a day enough?

Brushing your teeth is one of the starting steps to keeping your mouth clean. Of course, the brushing has to be done right, with a good amount of time. Also include flossing, inter-dental brushing as well as using a mouthwash for a thorough rinse. Flossing, as most are aware, involves a good length of cord worked between teeth to remove food particles. Inter-dental brushes take this one step further, with fine brushes that clean out the gap between the teeth, something a normal tooth brush cannot do. Plus, this brush can be easier to use compared to the floss. Mouthwash, when used to gargle and rinse out the mouth, can provide a clean feel with a fresh breath. Rather than how many times you brush your teeth, the focus should be on how well you are able to clean your teeth. When you are in a hurry, simply brushing is alright. But try to include the other activities, like flossing and or inter-dental brushing, particularly before going to bed.

## What would you recommend for anyone looking to improve their oral hygiene?

When a patient comes to me with a tooth issue, I always advise them to continue the recommended cleaning practices afterwards. You have to build up teeth cleaning habits from childhood. I recommend parents to start this as early as possible. There is a tendency



to overlook this since children's milk teeth fall out for the new adult teeth. But unless you are enforcing good habits like brushing their teeth from an early age, it becomes very difficult to cultivate an essential practice like this later on in life.

Another thing I'd have to stress on is chewing. With a change in food habits and easy availability of sugary foods and drinks, it's easier than ever to ruin your teeth. Pick up fibrous fruits and crunchy vegetables once in a while. Always chew properly with the molars (flat teeth that are at the back of the mouth) and never with the front teeth.

And do not forget to brush your teeth before sleeping. Even if you are busy

throughout the day, always go for a good brushing right before going to bed. Five to ten minutes a day on your teeth and mouth everyday will benefit you throughout your life.

Finally, try to visit a dentist twice a year. This leaves everything out of the hand of any unconscious negligence.

## There is currently a campaign going on – "BDS nah to daater daaktar nah." (If the dentist is not BDS certified, they are not dentists). What are your thoughts on this?

BDS stands for Bachelor of Dental Surgery. Just as one would look for a certified physician, a BDS certification is a necessity for a certified dental practitioner. Also, just as you need physicians with specialisations, look out for the same when you want to consult a dentist. For example, oral surgeons work on those with cleft palates and other jaw alignment issues. In contrast, an orthodontist works to straighten patients' teeth and aligning their jaws to correct any issue, such as an overbite or underbite. Try to understand these differences before consulting for any dental issue.

You do not want to end up with a quack, despite their claims and so-called certifications. Your teeth require the utmost care, and only a certified dental specialist can help you with it.

By Iris Farina

Photo courtesy: Dr Raquibul H Rumi

# BDS\* না তো দাঁতের ডাক্তার না

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