

## Do not neglect oral health!

By Shamila Jamaluddin

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ABU DHABI: Has any of you skipped a visit to the dentist of recent. Many do put off their visits to the dental clinics which result in poor oral health.

Dentists are witnessing a surge in dental-related problems due to this negligence. 'The danger of neglecting oral hygiene could lead to serious dental hazards', the experts warned.

DrShifaSaleem, Dental Surgeon, Golden Sands Medical Center, Abu Dhabi, told 'The Gulf Today' that she treats around ten to fifteen patients a day from as young as four years to seventy years old. "The most common dental problems include tooth aches, hypersensitivity of teeth, dental cavity, dental abscess, replacement of missing teeth, bridge re-cementation, deposits and staining on teeth."

She advised that the best and the first method is tooth brushing. "Get into a routine of tooth brushing. Brush your teeth twice a day, in the morning and at night. Use a toothbrush with soft, rounded-end bristles and a head that is small enough to reach all parts of your teeth and mouth."

"Replace your toothbrush every three to four months. Use a fluoride toothpaste. Some fluoride toothpastes also offer tartar control, which may help slow the formation of hard mineral build up (tartar) on the teeth," she added.

"Quit smoking," warned DrSaleem. "A majority of the patients coming to me are smokers. Quit or gradually refrain and reduce the habit of smoking for the better of yourself and all around you," she warned.

### Dental coverage

Moreover, many residents are aware of oral hygiene unlike in the past but the financial constraints make them ignore the initial dental irritations.

Most health insurance schemes do not include dental coverage. Many expatriates feel that

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authorities have to consider the plight of the middle and low income expatriates and add dental treatment in their health cards.

DrShifa adds that there are many patients coming to me and asking the cost of the treatment, first, to decide on whether they can afford to take up the treatment or not. Patients coming with pain, usually take a course of antibiotics and pain killers to get temporary relief of pain and refuse to do the follow up dental treatments because of high cost.

"In my opinion, the emergency dental treatments including incision and drainage of dental abscess, tooth extractions, pulpectomy/pulpotomy {root canal treatment} and scaling should be covered by insurance. It would be very helpful for the patients from a lower economic status," observed DrSaleem.

### **Sensitivity**

Moreover, the greatest pain could be the loss of a good tooth, which if taken care of promptly could have been saved.

"Tooth sensitivity is a common name for dentin hypersensitivity or root sensitivity. If hot, cold, sweet or very acidic foods and drinks, or even breathing in cold air, makes your teeth or a tooth sensitive or painful then you have sensitive teeth. Almost half the patients coming to me, have tooth sensitivity," explained DrSaleem.

Sensitivity to hot and cold, does not occur in the gums, but they occur in teeth.

Tooth sensitivity occurs when the hardest outer layer of tooth, enamel - covering the crown of tooth, wears off or when the thin outer layer of cementum - covering the root surface, is exposed due to gum recession or periodontal disease, leading to the exposure of the underlying dentin. "After taking anything cold or hot, the fluid in the microscopic dentinal tubules, move and irritates the nerves in the tooth, causing pain," she explained further.

Causes leading to tooth sensitivity include: Hard tooth brushing, Side-to-side brushing right at the gum line can make your enamel go away faster. Also, using a low abrasion toothpaste can help reduce the chance that you will have tooth sensitivity.

In addition acidic foods and drinks, Soda, sticky candy, high-sugar carbs etc, also attack enamel. "Instead, snack on Fibre-rich fruits and vegetables, cheese, Milk and plain yogurt," she opined.

"To prevent gum disease and other oral health problems, schedule regular dental cleanings and exams. In the meantime, contact your dentist if you notice any signs or symptoms that could suggest oral health problems, such as Red, tender or swollen gums, Gums that bleed when you brush or floss, Unusual sensitivity to hot and cold Persistent bad breath or an unusual taste in your mouth and mouth ulcers or sores that don't heal," she concluded.

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