

新年護齒有法

Dental care in the new year

農曆新年期間，相信大家都會準備年糕及湯圓等賀年食品，為新一年帶來「好意頭」。好好享受節日氣氛固然重要，但家長在過年期間也須注意孩子的牙齒健康，尤其賀年食品多數為甜點，過量食用容易造成蛀牙或其他口腔問題，後果可大可小。

Dishes such as New Year puddings and glutinous rice balls are especially popular around Chinese New Year as they are symbols of blessings and bliss. While we indulge in the happy holidays, parents must stay vigilant to children's dental health as eating too many sweets could result in tooth decay or other serious dental issues.

注意子女的糖分攝取

根據世界衛生組織指引，成人及兒童的游離糖攝取量應保持於每日能量總攝取量的百分之十內。進食糖分較高的食物時，口腔中的細菌會分解當中的糖分，過程中產生的酸素可令牙齒組織內的礦物質流失，逐漸形成蛀牙。我們的唾液具有中和這種酸素的功效，有助避免牙齒表面的礦物質流失，保護牙齒健康，不過過程需時約三十分鐘，若中途再次進食，唾液便無法發揮作用。因此，在農曆新年期間，家長首先應留意孩子有否過量進食高糖食物，其次則要減少他們進食的次數。專家指出，最理想的進食次數為一日三餐，若要吃零食，可於正餐時間一次過進食。同時，小朋友亦應減少飲用汽水等酸性飲品，並避免進食拖肥糖等黏性較高的糖果，減低牙齒礦物質加劇流失的風險。



換牙期的口腔護理

小朋友一般會從六歲起踏入換牙期，乳齒開始因牙根收縮而變得鬆動，亦有機會出現乳齒還未脫落，但恆齒已長出的情況。這時候，小朋友或許會因為害怕疼痛而刷牙時草草了事，導致食物殘渣仍然留在牙齒表面上，引致蛀牙問題。因此，家長應分外留意孩子的口腔衛生，必要時可利用紗布為子女清潔已開始鬆動的乳齒，避免牙周組織發炎。

孩子六歲時，他們的乳白齒後方會長出四隻恆齒，故也被稱為「六歲齒」。它們對日後其他恆齒的排列和位置非常重要，且不能像乳齒一般

「換牙」，家長和子女刷牙時必須加倍用心，確保牙刷能觸及口腔最後面。

若不幸出現蛀牙，家長應及早帶子女求醫，避免影響鄰近牙齒。面對蛀牙風險較高的小朋友，牙醫則會視乎情況為他們在牙齒表面塗上窩溝封閉劑，阻隔牙菌膜中的細菌與食物中的糖分接觸，減低蛀牙的機會。

Be mindful of children's sugar intake

The World Health Organization recommends adults and children to limit free sugars to under 10% of one's daily caloric intake. When consuming sweets, bacteria in our mouths will metabolize the dietary sugar and produce acids, which may demineralize the surfaces of our teeth and lead to tooth decay. Although our saliva can neutralize the acids, the process takes around 30 minutes. If we eat again in the meantime, the acids will not be neutralized properly. Therefore, parents should pay attention to children's sugar intake and prevent frequent consumption during the holidays. Follow experts' advice in keeping to three meals a day and limit snacks to meal times. To further reduce the risk of demineralized teeth, keep children away from acidic beverages like soft drinks, as well as sticky foods such as toffee.

Dental care in the mixed dentition stage

Children tend to enter the tooth transition period at around six years old. During this stage, their deciduous teeth will loosen due to the resorption of the roots, or a permanent tooth may even start growing before the deciduous tooth falls off. Children may slack off on brushing their teeth out of fear of getting hurt, causing food residue to linger and resulting in tooth decay. Parents should stay more alert to children's dental health during this period of time. For instance, use gauze to clean their loose tooth when necessary to prevent inflammation in the periodontal tissues.

At the age of six, a total of four permanent molars will erupt behind children's last primary molars. These teeth play an essential role in the overall positioning of the rest of the permanent teeth. Since we only get one set of these molars in our lifetime, children are advised to brush their teeth even more thoroughly and parents should make sure the toothbrush reaches all the way to the back of their mouths.

When tooth decay occurs, parents should bring children to the dentist's clinic as soon as possible to contain the situation. For children with higher risks of tooth decay, dentists will apply fissure sealant on the surfaces of their teeth to separate the plague bacteria and dietary sugars.

