

YOUR DENTAL HEALTH

Following Few Simple Rules Can Protect Your Teeth

(This is one of a series of articles on dental health prepared by the Harbor Dental Society, an affiliate of the American Dental Association.)

Members of ancient tribes often wore teeth around their necks as a mark of beauty. We moderns like to wear them in our mouths.

But it has only been in recent centuries that man has considered his teeth to be of real importance. Until the major killing diseases were brought under some measure of control, men had too many other things to worry about. Why be concerned about keeping his teeth when his life expectancy was only 35 or 40 years?

But now, the average man lives until age 70—and in his seventieth year he should still have his natural teeth. IF WE FOLLOW the rules of good dental health, the American Dental Association says, our teeth can last a lifetime. Nature meant them to. Strange, isn't it, that although we know more than ever about how to keep our

teeth, most Americans suffer from dental disease. A recent national survey showed dental patients under four years of age had an average of three teeth in need of fillings: —those aged 15 to 19 had five on the average. And these figures don't include those persons who never see a dentist.

YET IF WE understand the cause of tooth loss and act on our knowledge, we need not be a nation of dental cripples. What are our teeth like? A tooth consists of a crown and a root. The crown is protected by a hard outer coat of enamel. The bulk of the tooth under the enamel consists of den-

tin. Inside the dentin is the pulp, a delicate tissue, which contains nerves and blood vessels. THE ROOT of the tooth is covered with cementum, which serves to bind the tooth to the jawbone and the gums by means of periodontal fibers projecting from it. The jawbone, periodontal

fibers, and the gums are the tooth's supporting tissues. The enamel protects the tooth against damage from the outside and provides the hard surface we need for biting and chewing. The dentin, which is also hard, and the pulp, provide the pathways for tooth nourishment. Food for the teeth is carried by the blood stream through

the jawbone and into the tooth's blood vessels in the pulp. So long as the teeth remain intact and the supporting tissue are kept strong, our teeth remain healthy. Good dental habits assure good tooth health. In future articles, we will discuss what these dental habits are.

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