

## APPENDIX.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, N.Z.—MEDICAL BRANCH.

(Circular issued by the Medical Inspectors of Schools.)

### DECAYED TEETH IN CHILDREN.

A CLEAN mouth is more important than a clean face. Care of the child's teeth will add to his present vigour and happiness, and help to ensure his future health and success in life.

The teeth are necessary to grind the food. They ought to last throughout life, but we lose them by decay. Particles of food easily get caught in the little hollows in and between the teeth. These particles soon ferment and cause decay of the teeth.

#### I. DECAYED TEETH CAUSE ILL HEALTH.

1. Bad teeth can give rise to such diseases as blood-poisoning, consumption, pneumonia, diphtheria, rheumatism, and many others, because—

(a.) Disease-germs multiply rapidly in a decayed tooth. The minute germs of the diseases mentioned may lodge there and multiply by the thousands in a few hours.

(b.) Disease-germs can enter the body through a decayed tooth. The decayed spot communicates with minute vessels that enter the tissues of the body. When the disease-germs enter the body they give rise to the corresponding disease.

2. Bad teeth cause stomach troubles, because poisonous material and germs are swallowed with every mouthful of food. This causes poor digestion, bad breath, poor general health, and liability to illness.

3. Bad teeth render chewing difficult or impossible, and food which is not thoroughly chewed and mixed with the saliva causes indigestion and constipation.

4. Bad teeth cause toothache, and chronic toothache makes children nervous and irritable.

#### II. DECAY IN TEETH CAN BE PREVENTED.

1. Try to develop good teeth: When a baby is born the buds of all the teeth, both first and second, are present under the gums. Anything that interferes with the baby's health interferes with the nutrition of the developing teeth. Natural feeding is best for the baby's health, and therefore best for the growing teeth.

2. Use the teeth: If the teeth are not used when they are growing they will never grow strong. Children should therefore have hard food to chew, such as crusts, oat-cakes, &c.; a hard apple is good to finish a meal. Avoid too much soft and sweet food, as it satisfies the appetite without exercising the teeth.

3. Keep the teeth clean: Uncleanliness leads to decay. Biscuits and sweets between meals are very bad for the teeth, as the sweet particles stick in the cracks and readily ferment.

(a.) Begin to clean the teeth early in life. Each child should have his own tooth-brush and be proud of it. The "clean-mouth habit" cannot be formed too soon.

(b.) Clean the teeth thoroughly. Use tooth-powder or clean soap on the tooth-brush or salt in the water. Brush the teeth up and down and over all surfaces as well as across. Wash the mouth well at the same time.

(c.) Clean the teeth regularly. They should be cleaned at least once a day, but better after each meal. They should always be cleaned last thing at night.

4. Watch for signs of decay, and, if possible, get the teeth inspected by a dentist once or twice a year.

N.B.—Parents should look out for the first permanent molars. They come at about the sixth year, immediately behind the first teeth, and are nearly always mistaken for first teeth. They are perhaps the most important teeth in the mouth, and should never be allowed to decay.

5. Attend to the general health. A healthy, sturdy child is most likely to have strong, sound teeth; and poor general health reacts on the teeth.

#### III. DECAYED TEETH SHOULD BE TREATED.

1. Get the first teeth treated if they show signs of decay. This is always worth while, as the mouth must be kept clean and healthy for the second teeth.

2. Directly a tooth begins to decay obtain treatment. Money thus spent will be money well spent. It will help to save doctors' bills. If a decayed tooth is treated early it need give no pain, and ought to last throughout life.

3. Never allow a bad tooth to remain in the mouth. One bad tooth in a mouth will set the others going, as one bad apple among good ones. If decay is extensive the tooth must be extracted. This is always a great pity, because artificial teeth are not nearly as good as natural teeth.

N.B.—Natural teeth can exert a pressure of 250 lb.; artificial teeth of only 50 lb.

#### Remember—

- (1.) Where teeth are bad a child swallows poison with every mouthful of food.
- (2.) Teeth should be cleaned at least once a day to prevent their decay.
- (3.) If a tooth decays treat it at once.

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### SUGGESTIONS TO PARENTS.

In order that your child may receive the fullest benefit from his school training, and grow up to be a health and vigorous citizen, you are asked to do your part by attending to the following matters:—

*Sleep.*—Children attending school require at least ten hours of quiet refreshing sleep in a well-aired bedroom with open windows. Many young children are not sent to bed early enough, and do not get nearly enough sleep. Delicate, nervous, and anæmic children especially need sleep. The excitement of evening entertainments is very harmful and interferes with sound sleep.