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**INTERNATIONAL
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Advice on Health (No. 110)

THE SCHOOL DENTAL NURSE EXPLAINS

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Department)

"It's only a baby tooth, it doesn't matter!" Is grandmother to be blamed for this generally accepted statement? Or for the fact that her daughters, the present mothers of our land, don't know that teeth must be fed rightly from before birth as well as afterwards, kept cleaned and kept at work in the jaws, if second teeth are to follow baby teeth correctly spaced, in proper places, and in nice rounded jaws. Letting baby teeth decay so that they have to be pulled out before time means that mother has been woefully ignorant

or careless. There's a lack of balance in the diet (teeth will remain healthy only if fed correctly), the toddler hasn't been trained to clean teeth efficiently twice a day, and when holes have appeared they haven't been filled immediately to keep the tooth working and holding its position in the jaw, so that the second teeth will come through adequately spaced and correctly aligned for biting and chewing. Three separate criminal offences—unbalanced diet, dirty teeth, holes in teeth remaining unfilled. A health court must convict. Mother, if

your toddler's teeth remain unattended. First teeth should remain working in good order or filled until pushed out or loosened by the second set. So enrol your toddler early, either at a school dental clinic or with a private dentist.

Recently a school dental nurse, worried by maternal indifference about toddlers' teeth, talked to the Women's Institute of her area: "I am a School Dental Nurse in the State Dental Service. If this service is to be run efficiently the best must be given by the Department with the full co-operation both of the nurses and of the parents. Now the influence of a body of women such as yourselves should be of practical importance—provided you understand the aims of the Service. These are, to advise how the mouth can be kept healthy, to make the mouth healthy if need be, and to assist in keeping it so. Just as a plant requires special care until it reaches the adult stage, so does a child's mouth. Nowadays dental defects develop very early."

The baby teeth (the "Deciduous" teeth) are present in the jaws before birth (hence the need for pre-natal care), but usually not until about six months after birth do teeth appear, and then the roots have still to be completed. Years later these roots are gradually absorbed into the blood stream to make way for the permanent teeth growing directly underneath. This is why loose deciduous teeth which wobble out appear to have no roots.

When the child is about two years of age the 20 deciduous teeth are in position, and from then dental supervision is most important. The child may be enrolled at the clinic and called for regular examination. Unfortunately many parents wait until the child goes to school. Perfect sets of teeth are rare. Decay in its first stages often looks white and parents receive a shock when they learn that unsuspected holes exist. The consent form must be signed before treatment is begun, and then every defect is given attention. With an aching tooth, pain is first relieved and the tooth saved if possible. Only if teeth cannot be made healthy are they extracted. Do not imagine the clinic as a place of squeals and tears; ability in child psychology is no less important than operating skill. Generally, the younger the child the more readily he accepts the new experience.

Now something about the permanent teeth. They first appear between the age of five and six years, and of great importance are the six-year-old molars which come through at the back of the baby molars. So often, through neglect of proper care, these have to be filled while they are erupting through the gums. As the other permanent teeth erupt watch for irregularities, for as many as 80% of New Zealanders have crooked teeth. Much can be done to prevent and correct this in childhood. Crooked teeth interfere with proper use of the jaws, often deforming the growing face, and the physical defect influences the child's mental attitude. Be advised by your Dental Nurse—it may be necessary to visit a private dentist because the School Dental Nurse does not undertake straightening work. On the other hand, fillings and extractions both for baby teeth and for permanent teeth are common clinic routine.

Dear Mummy & Dad



"Dear Mum and Dad, We are pretty comfy here..." Yes, War isn't all fighting. There's a lot of waiting about, when a man can get bored and has time to realise what a long way he is from home.

That's the time when a parcel of food, cigarettes and chocolate helps. It gives him what he needs, and perhaps more important, it proves that the folks way back are thinking of him.

"... it's good to drop in to the recreation hut and have a game or a sing-song or a quiet read. There was a

jolly good concert last night, and the mobile film unit is giving a show tomorrow."

These are the things that help to keep up morale. They are the things we owe to the men who are defending us. Who pays for them? The Patriotic Funds.

A Recreation Hut may have the Y.M.C.A. triangle on it, or the Church Army Shield or the Catholic or Salvation Army symbols, but they are all Patriotic Huts. A sailor may get his outfit of woollens from the Navy

League and an airman from Air Force Relations, but the thing to remember is that the splendid work done by these great organisations (and others) is all made possible by Patriotic Funds.

Patriotic Funds express the thanks of thousands of people like yourself. When the Funds give, you give. The special comforts for the men in the field, for prisoners and the wounded, the thousand and one little attentions that make the War bearable, depend, ultimately on you—

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