

Dept. of Public Health Dentistry

TABOOS IN DENTISTRY

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BLOWING OF WORMS WILL PREVENT CARIES

REMOVAL OF TEETH AFFECTS EYE SIGHT.

TEETH ARE BLACKEND TO PREVENT CARIES

**TEETH AT BIRTH ARE CONSIDERED
BAD OMEN TO GRANDFATHER.**

**TEETH GETS LOOSEENED BY GETTING IT
CLEANED BY THE DENTIST**

**HARD AND VIGOUROUS BRUSHING
ONLY WILL CLEAN THE TEETH.**

**RAW BRINJAL NOT GIVEN TO
CHILDREN AS THEY BLACKEN THE TEETH**

**FALLEN TEETH ARE THROWN ON
TOP OF THE HOUSE.**

**GOLD CROWN IN A FRONT TOOTH INDICATES THAT
THE PERSON HAS VISITED MECCA**

FORWARDLY PLACED TEETH ARE CONSIDERED LUCKY

**KEEPING AN ASPIRIN TABLET,CLOVES,SUPARI
BESIDE A PAINFUL TOOTH REDUSES THE TOOTH PAIN.**

INTRODUCTION:

It is the prohibition against touching, saying, or doing something for **fear of immediate harm** from a supernatural force. The term is of Polynesian origin and was first noted by Capt. James Cook during his 1771 visit to Tonga, but taboos have been present in virtually all cultures. They may include

- prohibitions on fishing or hunting at certain seasons,
- eating certain foods, interacting with members of other social classes,
- coming into contact with corpses, and
- (for women) performing certain activities during menstruation.

DEFINITION:

A **taboo** is a strong social prohibition (or ban) against words, objects, actions, or discussions that are considered undesirable or offensive by a group, culture, society, or community.

VARIOUS TABOOS IN DENTISTRY:

- 1. Blowing of worms will prevent caries.
- 2. Teeth are blackened to prevent caries.
- 3. Teeth get loosened by getting cleaned by dentist.
- 4. Raw brinjal not given to children as they blacken the teeth.
- 5. Removal of teeth affects eye sight.
- 6. Cloves and supari is used to reduce tooth pain.
- 7. Forwardly placed teeth are considered lucky.
- 8. Fallen teeth are thrown on top of the house.
- 9. Hard and vigorous brushing only will clean the teeth.
- 10. Teeth at birth are considered bad omen to grandfather.
- 11. Gold crown in front tooth indicates that the person has visited Mecca.



Gold crown in front tooth indicates that the person has visited Mecca



Wrapping over extracted site for relieving pain



Removing of incisors for easy spitting



Alteration of the shape of the tooth in late childhood and teenage in some society



- Many decades ago unqualified dentists (quacks) provided certain dental treatment that was not based on scientific principles and along with this kind of assumption based treatment; taboos developed which became imprinted in people's minds.
- Dentistry today is an advanced specialized branch of medical science based on scientific facts. This advancement in dental science has only reduced the misconceptions and not completely eliminated it from the minds of the people.
- Here few of the taboos which still exist are presented along with their related facts for people to understand.

1. Removal of upper teeth affects vision.

Fact - Vision is not affected in any way

2. An artificial set of teeth or complete denture that is made once is forever.

Fact - It is a myth that it can be retained forever. The oral tissues that lie below the dentures change over a period of time. But the dentures are made of stiff materials that do not adapt according to the changing contours of the oral tissues. Thus even a well fitting denture may not fit well after a few years. If an ill-fitting denture is continued to be worn, it can cause damage to the underlying tissues. Thus most dentist advice changing of the dentures once in at least 5 years.

3. *Once a decayed tooth is treated the dental problem is over.*

Fact -. if the patient does not maintain good hygiene, decay can start again around restorations. Hence, whenever a tooth is filled or replaced it requires use of additional cleaning methods like flossing, interdental brushes, etc, in addition to regular tooth brushing. In addition dental check up once a year becomes all the more important when you have a treated tooth.

4. *Professional cleaning/scaling/removal of tartar loosens the teeth.*

Fact - Bad oral hygiene results in the deposition of tartar /calculus on the tooth surface. These deposits irritate the gums and can cause inflammation and bleeding of the gums. If the tartar is not removed, the gums may recede and the supporting bone around the teeth gets destroyed. The tartar on the teeth thus causes great harm to the supporting tissues of the teeth. However, patients may experience slight mobility of the teeth after tartar is removed as it kind of binds the teeth together. Professional cleaning removes this tartar and arrests further destruction of supporting bone. Removal of tartar deposits only helps to recover the health of supporting structures. This chain of events does not take place in people who have dental checkup regularly.

5. Dental procedures are always painful.

Fact - Most dental procedures are carried out under local anesthesia,.In addition the modern day high-speed drills cause less vibration and are more comfortable for the patients.

6. Dental treatment should be avoided during pregnancy.

Fact -. Many a times dental treatment is provided even during late pregnancy. Routine dental procedures can be carried out without any fear. However, major surgical procedure may require medical opinion before treatment. Dental X-rays are to be avoided during the first three months of pregnancy.

7. Cleaning the teeth with finger & powder is better than with toothbrush.

Fact – The use of a tooth brush with bristles to clean plaque and food particles from almost all the surfaces of the teeth.

8. Charcoal, salt, rice husk, tobacco, etc, in powder form is better than toothpaste in cleaning teeth.

Fact - A standard paste or powder contains proper sized particles, which are not harmful to the teeth. However, other powders are coarse and can erode the outer layer of the teeth and permanently damage them. Toothpaste is better than powder as it can easily be dispensed on the brush and it may contain fluorides, anti-tartar chemicals, etc. The foaming action of the toothpaste also helps to freshen the mouth. Tobacco should not be used. Users enjoy the euphoric effect of nicotine present in tobacco rather than cleaning of the teeth and slowly become addicted to it. Hence, it should never be used.

9. A child never needs cleaning of milk teeth.

Fact - Children are as much prone for dental decay or gum diseases as adults. In fact children tend to have sweet food including sweetened milk and juices which can promote dental caries. So it is advisable to start the habit of cleaning the infant's teeth soon after they appear in the mouth. In fact it is advised to clean baby's gum pads everyday by gentle massage even before the teeth erupt.

10. Milk teeth need not be cared for because they last only for a few years, and these teeth will anyway be replaced by permanent teeth.

Fact - Early loss of milk teeth will interfere with chewing and affect the child's nutrition. Early loss of milk teeth leads to drifting of the adjacent teeth and closure of some of the space that is required for the succeeding permanent teeth to erupt into. Such a loss of space will cause the permanent teeth to erupt in irregular position and result in crowding. Therefore milk teeth need to be cared for as much as permanent teeth.

11. When the gums bleed, it is better not to brush the teeth.


Fact - This usually is a result of plaque and food particles accumulating around the teeth. This is an indication that the individual needs to visit a dentist for opinion and treatment. Brushing the teeth with a soft toothbrush by the proper technique removes the plaque and helps the gums recover. Initial bleeding seen during brushing gradually reduces over a period of time.

12. Keeping an aspirin tablet beside a painful tooth reduces the tooth pain.

Fact - A toothache cannot be relieved by placing an aspirin tablet anywhere in the mouth. In fact this is a dangerous habit as it causes burns of the soft tissues around the area of placement. Hence, aspirin tablets should not be placed in mouth but swallowed after eating some food to relieve the pain.



Tooth fairy: Many people tell their children that when we loose our teeth/tooth, and when placed under our pillow before we sleep a tooth fairy comes and exchanges the tooth with a gift.



People seem to cringe when they hear the words root canal. But reading the truth about these 10 root canal myths can help you get a better sense of what having a root canal really is all about.

- **1. ROOT CANALS HURT**

- Today, with modern technology and better anesthetics, root canal treatments are no more painful than having a filling.

- **2. ROOT CANALS REQUIRE A LOT OF VISITS TO THE DENTIST**

- With today's cutting edge technology, most root canals can be performed in one or two office visits.

- **3. CROWNS CAUSE TEETH TO NEED ROOT CANALS**

- Many people believe that having a crown on a tooth means that the tooth will eventually need a root canal. Crowns do not cause the need for root canal therapy. If a crowned tooth does require a root canal, it could be that the tooth has abscessed or that decay has gotten underneath the crown and reached the pulp of the tooth.

- **4. ROOT CANALS CAUSE ILLNESS**

However, there is evidence to support the fact that people who have had root canals are no more at risk for developing illness than people who have never had root canals.

- **5. ROOT CANALS INVOLVE REMOVING THE ROOTS OF THE TOOTH**

- When the dentist or endodontist performs a root canal treatment, he or she removes the pulp from inside of the tooth. The roots of the tooth are not removed.

- **6. PREGNANT WOMEN CAN'T GO FOR ROOT CANAL TREATMENT**

- Pregnant women can and do have root canals. Having a root canal does require a small x-ray, but the radiation exposure is very minimal and the x-ray is aimed at the mouth, not the abdomen area. If you are pregnant and your dentist needs to give you an x-ray, he will use a lead apron to cover your belly. The anesthetics that dentists use are also safe for pregnant women.

- **7. EVEN WITH A ROOT CANAL, THE TOOTH WILL COME OUT EVENTUALLY**

If you have your tooth properly restored, maintain good oral hygiene and visit your dentist for regular checkups, your natural tooth could last for the rest of your life.

- **8. IF THE TOOTH DOESN'T HURT, THERE IS NO NEED FOR A ROOT CANAL**

While a throbbing toothache usually results in the need for root canal treatment, many times a tooth can require root canal treatment when there is no pain present. Dentists and endodontists are specially trained to test a tooth to see if the pulp has been infected or damaged. If this is the case, a root canal would be necessary to save the tooth.

- **9. PULLING THE TOOTH IS BETTER THAN GETTING A ROOT CANAL**

Keeping your natural teeth for as long as possible is very important for proper eating and chewing functions.

- **10. AFTER HAVING A ROOT CANAL, MY TOOTH IS COMPLETELY RESTORED**

After having a root canal, it is extremely important to make a follow-up appointment with your dentist to have the tooth permanently restored. After the pulp of the tooth has been removed, the tooth can become very dry and brittle. Having a permanent restoration will help protect your tooth from fracturing.

- *Toothache*: apply the following mixture to the corresponding shoulder: figs, saffron, mustard seed, and plaster of myrrh; boil earthworms in oil and drop the oil into the ear holes; rub the tooth with dried cow's dung!
- *Tooth decay*: rinse with a mouthwash made by boiling dogs' teeth in wine.
- To make loose teeth firm, tie a frog to your jaw.

MUTILATIONS OF TEETH

- The practice of deliberate mutilation of human dentition is a phenomenon which is known to have existed since prehistoric times.
1. Non therapeutic tooth extractions
 2. Breaking off of tooth crowns
 3. Alteration in the shape of the tooth crowns
 4. Dental inlay work
 5. Lacquering and staining of teeth
 6. Placement of gold crowns for adornment purposes

WHY??

Tribal identification

Initiation rite

Sign of manhood or bravery

Differentiation of sexes

Sign of marriageable age in females

Sign of ceremonial rebirth

To ensure a life after death

Aesthetics and fashion

Therapeutic purposes

Sign of mourning

Form of punishment

Culture mimicry

Tooth evulsions:

- Removal of permanent mandibular central incisors among Iraq, Waarusha and Masai people of Tanzania---space left following removal of teeth provided route for fluids in event of person becoming ill.
- Certain regions of Africa including Northern Nigeria and Tanzania...germinectomy of deciduous canine..if child is suffering from fever,diarrhoea and vomiting...Nylon tooth.

REASONS????

- Signify some life event such as transition from childhood to manhood/womanhood
- Aesthetic or fashion

TEETH INVOLVED

- Back teeth for aesthetic reason
- One to four teeth

COMPLICATIONS

- Sepsis, abscess formation
- Periapical granuloma
- Pulp necrosis
- Soft tissue laceration

Fate of avulsed teeth:

- Buried by ceremonial fire
- Kept as charms
- Sent to members of other tribes
- fragments placed in piece of meat.(central Australia)
- Tooth removed from female then the pulverized tooth was eaten by girls mother
- In case of male, the tooth was eaten by his mother in laws.
- Placed in bark of tree
- Burying it beside water pool
- Throwing the extracted teeth into water or as far as possible

Alteration in shape of crown:

- Done by chipping and filing
- Anterior teeth..canine to canine
- Aesthetics, tribal identity, initiation rituals, religious motives.
- Flattening of incisal surfaces, grinding of incisors to gum level...after death...undergo a trial of chewing green bamboo.
- Two to twelve permanent anterior teeth
- Late childhood and teenage...both male and female

- Incisal edge, mesial and/or distal incisal angle/surface. Only labial surface or whole tooth crown.
- Wood piece is placed in molar teethknife or axe head and hammer/ stone is used. Smoothing is done by file or abrasive stone
- Make the patient lie or sit

COMPLICATIONS

- Fatal hemorrhage or went out of their minds
- Pulp necrosis
- Inflammatory periapical pathology
- Osteomyelitis
- Caries and tooth loss

Lacquering and dyeing of teeth:

- Blackening of teeth using an iron containing mixture
...Japan
- Chewing the leaves or bark of specific plant species
- For lacquering ...etching of the enamel surface for two days using lemon juice followed by application of appropriate staining lacquering agents like black paints, ginger and mango
- Shellac and spices such as cloves, cinnamon and pomegranate peel

Why???

- Signify marriage age
- aesthetic, and maturity
- Help prevent tooth decay

Decorative dental inlays and crowns

- Placing decorative inlays in front teeth was carried out in India...like teeth of Maharajahs were inlaid with glass or pearls
- Among Muslims the presence of a gold crown on front tooth is used to signify that the wearer has visited Mecca.
- Ancient Roman were familiar with dental restoration of gold.
- The dyaks of Borneo are reported to drill small holes into the labial surface of the maxillary teeth and place pieces of copper in variously shaped defects.

Mutilations of soft tissues:

Tattooing

- Lips and gingiva
- North Africa and the Middle East
- Gingival tattoo...in females when she reach puberty or they become married and in men to relieve the pain associated with diseased gums.
- Pigmented material(calcified peanuts, burned wood or from lamp black)is impregnated into the gingival mucosa by sharp thorns or needles...bluish black coloration is achieved.

- Tattoo on lower lip in Sudanese women....married
- Facial tattoos...triangular shaped tattoo ant the angle of mouth...save you from evil eye!!!!!!

Other forms:

- Piercing of lips and perioral soft tissues and the insertion of materials such as wood, ivory or metal
- The temporary piercing of orofacial soft tissue for ceremonial purposed
- Uvulectomy and facial scarring

- This awareness is important in the context of;
- 1. Sensitive approach and respect for cultural belief by those treating patients according to modern methods and by those planning dental care delivery systems.
- 2. Giving thought to the incorporation of local beliefs and practices.
- 3. Convincing people of the harmful effects of some practices.
- Those involved in providing dental care and professional dental education should identify the cultural practices involving the teeth and oral soft tissues.

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