

Preserving Natural Teeth to Maintain Oral Health

Chinese Stomatological Association¹

Oral health is an important component of general health, and oral disease is one of the most common human diseases that not only affects oral health and quality of life, but is also closely associated with overall health. Natural teeth are important functional organs and are crucial to oral functions and maintaining a healthy life. The Chinese Stomatological Association (CSA) has released this position statement on “Preserving Natural Teeth to Maintain Oral Health”, which is one of the most important achievements of the 2021 to 2023 CSA Annual Congress themed “Healthy Mouth, Protecting Natural Teeth”, advocating that everyone should take effective measures to protect their natural teeth, maintain oral health and promote general health. Chin J Dent Res 2024;27(1):11–12; doi: 10.3290/j.cjdr.b5139365

Taking measures actively to prevent oral diseases

Preventing oral diseases requires a joint effort from the public and oral professionals. The public must take responsibility for maintaining their own oral health, and should take the following preventive measures actively to avoid the occurrence of oral diseases and preserve healthy natural teeth:

- Learn about oral health to adopt healthy behaviours.
- Pay attention to oral cleansing throughout the lifetime to maintain oral hygiene. Avoid risk factors that can lead to oral diseases, for example by following a healthy diet, quitting smoking, limiting alcohol intake and avoiding betel nut.
- Implement topical fluoride application to prevent dental caries. Brush teeth using fluoride toothpaste in the morning and evening for at least 2 minutes each time. People at high risk of dental caries should visit their dental practitioner two to four times a year to receive professional fluoride application.
- Undergo professional tooth scaling once or twice a year to prevent dental caries and periodontal disease.

- Attend an oral examination at least once a year and seek professional advice on prevention and treatment.
- Receive pit and fissure sealant treatment to prevent pit and fissure caries in children and adolescents.
- Wear mouthguards for protection during sport and strenuous exercise to prevent oral maxillofacial trauma.

Oral professionals should fulfil oral health education duties.

They need to implement the concept of “prevention first” and carry out oral health education and promotion activities in depth to build a good oral health platform and create an environment that promotes caring for oral health, and to encourage the public to improve their oral health awareness and adopt good oral health behaviours. To combine the science communication of oral health with regular dental practice, the following recommendations are made:

- Disseminate oral health knowledge widely through the mass media, making full use of oral health-themed or related days, such as World Oral Health Day on 20 March, Children’s Day on 1 June and National Love Your Teeth Day on 20 September.
- Participate in popular science and produce public-friendly popular science works in various forms and styles that are easy to understand and remember.
- Make full use of the public areas in dental institutes to create an oral health education centre, including by

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setting up publicity boards in the registration hall and oral health education corners in the waiting area, and displaying multi-dimensional promotional material in posters, boards, flyers, videos, etc.

- Offer personalised chairside oral health education according to patients' individual problems.
- Encourage the public to receive regular oral health checkups.
- Promote the implementation and application of appropriate technologies for the prevention of oral diseases.

Early diagnosis and treatment of oral diseases

Oral diseases can be prevented and treated at an early stage. Early detection and treatment could save treatment time and costs and maximise the retention of natural teeth. Methods for early diagnosis and treatment include:

- Preventing the occurrence and development of periodontal diseases by performing regular periodontal examinations and early periodontal basic treatment, and treating gingivitis with supragingival cleaning to prevent the development of periodontitis.
- Treating dental caries and other dental diseases and repairing dental defects to prevent the progression of dental pulp diseases, maxillofacial inflammation and even systemic diseases in a timely manner.
- Correcting malocclusion deformity at an early stage to establish the normal occlusal function, promote the normal development of the maxillofacial region and maintain the health of the oral and maxillary system.
- Preventing serious loss of oral cavity function and reducing the threat to life by performing early screening for oral cancer, and detecting lesions in a timely manner and controlling their progression.

Trying to preserve natural teeth

Natural teeth are essential for oral function. For teeth suffering from disease, appropriate treatment measures should be taken actively to preserve natural teeth, restore function and maintain the integrity of the dentition. The following measures can be taken:

- Preserving healthy teeth and prolonging the life of natural teeth through supragingival cleaning, subgingival scraping and performing periodontal surgery and endodontic treatment when necessary.
- Carrying out the necessary crown restoration in a timely manner to prevent tooth splitting after large-area tooth defect or root canal treatment.
- Using appropriate orthodontic methods to correct the misalignment of teeth to prevent the aggravation of malocclusion.
- Removing the malpositioned or even impacted wisdom teeth as soon as possible to avoid affecting the health of neighbouring teeth. Normally, there is no need to repair the wisdom teeth after removal. Wisdom teeth that erupt in the right position with an occlusal relationship can be retained.
- Extracting teeth that oral professionals deem unable to be retained in a timely manner to avoid affecting the health of other teeth and surrounding tissues.
- Restoring missing teeth in a timely manner to maintain the integrity of the dentition, perform normal functions and improve quality of life.

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