

Each Iranian Teenager almost has Four Damaged Teeth

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About one century of modern pediatric dentistry activities has passed in Iran. Unfortunately, the view of the middle classes of society about pediatric dental care has not changed that much compare to a few decades ago in this country. Evidences suggest that every Iranian over 12 years has 4 damaged teeth, as Dr. Biat M., the president of the oral and maxillofacial association of Iran, said on a TV interview. This is due to a change in the diet of children from tasty foods to soft foods, excessive consumption of sweets and carbohydrates and junk foods.

In Iran, the costs of dental care and services are higher than people's income, and the dental care is less covered by the insurance; but overall compare to the cost of dental care in the other countries, it is less expensive. Even though the cost of dentistry is lower than that of other countries, but with particular attention to the low income of most people and the inability to pay the dental costs, the majorities of parents do not care about the oral health of their children and easily bypass it.

Another important issue is that the majority of parents believe the primary teeth will be replaced after a while by permanent teeth, so why should they pay for the treatment of these teeth? Unfortunately, due to poor oral hygiene and lack of attention to this problem in adolescents, it is safe to say that most adolescents of the middle classes of society in Iran suffer from permanent decay and gum disease, which ultimately leads to loss of teeth.

In another part of his interview, Dr. Biat said: "the new look for preventive dentistry has long been practiced in many developed countries. For example; Finland was a country that DMF index for 12 years old was 8 in 35 years ago, and today this figure has dropped to 0.8. On the other hand, Iran's DMF index is 4 for 12 years old children. So, every child has an average of four teeth which are extracted, filled or decayed. This figure is higher at older ages. Most people over 40 years have an average of three teeth that are extracted".

From three years ago, officials at the Ministry of Health and Education felt the alarm and tried to approach this issue by implementing the oral health plan in elementary and secondary schools. This national plan consists of three parts: fissure sealants, fluoride therapy and restoration of first molar teeth. They focused on prevention dentistry for ages 6 to 12 years. The national plan does not include any costs for parents and is free of charge. One of the drawbacks to this plan is why should not these preventive dentistry start from kindergartens? Why should the starting point be from the primary school?

Another important issue is that, unfortunately, the schools in Iran do not teach how to care for oral hygiene and do not focus on them. In addition, the activity of health educators in schools is too vague, which shows weaknesses in the educational system. Consequently, the development of a comprehensive training plan is helpful in this regard. As the work begins in kindergarten and the necessary health education is provided to parents, we will see a reduction in this dilemma. Although training and compiling a comprehensive program can cost a lot for the government and also cover a lot of time, in the long run, the implementation of this plan can result in a significant reduction in dental caries among adolescents.

In the end we will come to a conclusion if all Iranian dentists take part in this national plan and give parents sufficient education in oral health and consider humanitarian importance for this issue, the Iranian dentists community will be able to significantly reduce the rate of dental caries and dental problems in adolescents. But this comes to accomplishing when the media, the educational system in schools and the government fully support. However, in recent years, the oral health improvement plan has been somewhat successful, but performing only dental preventive methods without children's education and parenting advice will not be a long-term sustainable plan.

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