

**Head Office**

Sane Guruji Premises, Block No. 6, 1st Floor, 386, Veer Savarkar Marg, Opp. Siddhivinayak Temple,  
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## INDIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION

### SUGGESTIONS TO PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

on

### Education Policy

#### Introduction

*The Indian Dental Association (IDA) is the largest recognised body of dental professionals in India with a national presence. As custodian of oral health in the country, IDA has been in the forefront of promoting oral healthcare awareness in the country and improving the quality of oral healthcare services rendered to the community. With over 70,000 members, IDA works through its 29 State and over 360 local branches spread across the country to promote oral health.*

#### Teeth and their care

*Over the past several years, IDA has been engaged in implementing various programmes aimed at imparting proper knowledge to the people on the **basics of teeth and their care. Oral health is integral to enjoying overall health and quality of life.** IDA's goal is the attainment of optimal oral health in the country and to supplement the Government of India's highly ambitious target of attaining optimal oral health by 2020. IDA endeavours to provide oral healthcare services of the highest ethical and professional standards to all segments of the population through its 29 State and over 350 local branches spanning the country.*

#### What's oral health?

*Oral health is a state of being free from chronic mouth and facial pain, oral and throat cancer and such other related ailments. Mouth disorders like dental caries or tooth decay and tooth loss, gum or periodontal diseases, birth defects such as cleft lip and palate, and such other oral ailments are others that afflict the oral cavity. The fact that our mouth mirrors our general health establishes the obvious link between oral health and general health. The major cause of the rising incidence of oral diseases could be attributed to the kind of lifestyle that*

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we lead today. Risk factors for oral diseases include **unhealthy diet, tobacco use, harmful alcohol use, and poor oral hygiene.**

**Oral diseases**

Oral diseases such as dental caries (tooth decay), periodontitis (gum disease) and oral and pharyngeal cancers are universal and cause concern. Losing teeth is seen as a natural consequence of ageing, but it is, in fact, preventable. Dental caries affects over 90% of school children and the vast majority of adults. The pain, suffering, impaired function and reduced quality of life owing to oral diseases is both extensive and expensive and is beyond the resources of many. With changing living conditions, dental caries is expected to increase, particularly as a result of the growing consumption of sugars and inadequate exposure to fluorides.

Most children show signs of gingivitis (bleeding gums) and, among adults the initial stages of periodontal disease are prevalent in nearly 55%. Severe periodontitis, which may result in tooth loss, is found in nearly 15% of the population. The prevalence of oral cancer is the highest in the country. Oral cancer constitutes 12% in men and 8% among women. and has the highest rate of cancer deaths in the world and has the highest mortality rate as compared to other malignancies. Smoking, smokeless tobacco use, betel chewing, and excessive use of alcohol, are all risk factors.

**Prevention**

Prevention is better than cure. Hence IDA has been pioneering prevention as its strategy. Awareness creation is a part of this policy. These strategies get reflected in all the programmes and projects undertaken by IDA to improve oral health in the country. Oral health systems need to be oriented to primary healthcare and prevention has to be brought about through awareness creation. Increasing emphasis has also been placed on targeting the different segments of population, particularly children, the young and the elderly. The burden of oral diseases and other chronic diseases can be decreased simultaneously by addressing common risk factors such as tobacco use and unhealthy diet. We are quite hopeful of improving the oral health scenario in the country. What is needed is educating the people particularly children.

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The goal of IDA is to secure optimal oral health for all, and it all starts with children inasmuch as oral healthcare begins at infancy. School children must be educated as a part of their syllabus about the vital links between oral health and systemic health. Prevention of dental problems has to be the all-pervading message. This calls for continuous reaffirmation of the dire need for periodic dental checkups and maintenance of oral hygiene. Taking measures to keep the children's mouth clean is essential for excellent dental health. A daily [oral hygiene](#) regimen is needed to remove the [dental plaque](#) that causes [tooth decay](#) and gum disease. Good oral hygiene not only helps prevent [cavities](#), but is necessary to battle [bad breath](#) as well.

**Suggestions**

As the custodian of oral health in the country, IDA would suggest incorporation of dental health in the syllabus of school children highlighting those aspects that increase oral health awareness among children to improve their overall health and productivity. IDA would implore the government to seriously and sincerely consider the following suggestions:

**I. Oral Hygiene Instructions**

- a) **Brushing** is the foremost oral hygiene practice. Children must brush twice daily after meals. A good teeth cleaning regimen after eating will help remove dental plaque bacteria and reduce the chances of getting dental cavities. Learning how to brush properly is vital. For proper brushing techniques, hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle towards the gums. Brush in a back-and-forth motion, making sure to reach every surface of each tooth. Brushing the tongue will further remove the bacteria that cause bad breath. Brushing with fluoride toothpaste helps to greatly reduce dental plaque bacteria. Brush for at least two minutes to remove as much dental plaque as possible using a soft-bristled toothbrush to be replaced every three months. Healthy eating habits are an equally important part of the oral hygiene regimen.
- b) **Flossing** at least once a day is needed to remove the food particles that remain in between the teeth. Learn how to floss properly by holding the

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*floss securely with each hand, and easing the floss between teeth, gently pulling the floss up and down.*

- c) **Mouthwash** can also remove the bacteria that cause dental plaque.
- d) **Professional Cleanings** occasionally help maintain dental health. Regardless of how well oral hygiene is practiced at home, regular dental visits every six months are essential to sustain dental health.

**II. Importance of proper and nutritious food habits**

*Diet has a significant impact on a person's oral health. Eating certain foods can cause tooth decay or gum disease. A poor diet can also lead to poor nutrition, which can cause oral health problems such as premature tooth loss and bad breath. Proper diet can help improve oral health. Eating a well-balanced nutritious diet, limiting snacking and choosing healthy snacks would contribute to good dental health. The choice of foods and how often food is eaten can affect the health of teeth and gums.*

*For healthy living and for healthy teeth and gums, a balanced diet is necessary. To have a balanced diet, eat a variety of foods – bread, cereals and other grains, fish, poultry and meat, milk and dairy products and fruits and vegetables. Choose nutritious foods, such as cheese, raw vegetables, plain yogurt, or a piece of fruit. Limit the number of snacks that you eat in between meals and reduce processed food consumption.*

**III. Dental Caries or tooth decay**

*Dental caries or tooth decay is the single most chronic childhood disease, second only to common cold. Millions of bacteria reside in the mouth. When food is eaten the bacteria that live in the mouth thrive on certain forms of sugar found in many foods. When these sugars aren't cleaned off the teeth, the bacteria quickly begin feeding on them and producing acids. The bacteria form what's called bacterial plaque, a sticky film that adheres to the teeth. If the plaque is not removed while it's soft, it becomes hard and difficult to remove. The acids in the plaque remove minerals in the tooth's hard, outer enamel. This erosion*



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*causes tiny openings or holes on the enamel surface causing the beginning of decay unless promptly reversed by treatment.*

*Dental caries can cause functional, physical and aesthetic impairment, often compromising children's quality of life with repercussions on their general health at an early age. Dental caries may interfere with their daily activities impacting on loss of schooldays, studies, their daily functions, growth and well-being.*

**IV. Prevention, Early detection, & Treatment aspects of Dental Caries.**

*Dental caries or tooth decay is a disease that can cause damage to the tooth structure. Good oral and dental hygiene can help avoid cavities and tooth decay. Oral examination by a dental professional at least twice a year would facilitate early diagnosis of any emerging dental problems and appropriate measures could be taken to prevent any damage. Tooth decay can cause **pain, infection and even affect children's growth. Neglect of dental caries can lead to gum disease which, if neglected, could then lead to, according to research findings, other systemic complications such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, stroke, etc.***

**V. Oral Cancer and its causes**

*Oral cancer is cancer of the mouth. It can occur in the lining of the mouth or in the deeper tissues. Cancer of the mouth lining makes up nearly 90 percent of all oral cancers.*

*Oral cancer is not caused by one thing, but certain factors acting in combination increase its risk. Factors include smoking, chewing tobacco or using snuff, chewing betel nut and areca nut, drinking excessive alcohol, etc., all these increase the risk of developing oral cancer. The risk of oral cancer is even higher when people have more than one or all of these unhealthy habits.*

**VI. Prevention, Early detection & Treatment of Oral cancer**

*Most oral cancers are diagnosed by examining the signs or symptoms, including lumps, ulcers, sores, and abnormal swellings. Since oral cancers can be painless and have no symptoms in the beginning, it's important to have regular oral checkups for early detection of any cancerous lesions. About 40 percent of all*

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*cancers are oral cancer. Oral cancer is preventable if detected early and treated. When oral cancer is detected early, treatment is highly successful. Regular dental checkups by a dental healthcare service provider can facilitate detection of cancerous lesions.*

*It may not be out of place to mention here that even varying percentages of school children have been detected with oral cancer because of the use of tobacco in various forms and constant alcohol consumption. Dental check up of school children not only helps early detection of any signs of cancerous lesions but also in counselling them on the harmful effects of tobacco use aimed at making them quit the habit.*

*To treat oral cancer, doctors may administer one or more of three primary treatment modalities. They are surgery, radiation therapy or chemotherapy. In order to determine the progress of the cancerous growth, doctors may perform additional tests, including an X-ray, CT scan (computerized tomography) or MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).*

*These are a few suggestions that IDA would like the Ministry to consider including in the syllabus of school children with a view to preparing a new generation of young healthy children to improve the general health index and productivity of the nation.*

**For the convenience of the Ministry, the suggestions are recapitulated below:**

- Oral health must be made a part of the syllabus of school children**
- Importance of oral health in overall health and well being to be highlighted**
- Common oral diseases to be described in brief, particularly dental caries or tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer and their severe consequences on general health if timely treatment is not provided**
- Oral cancer and the contributing factors must be adequately described and the serious public health problems that it conjures**

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**up for policy makers, including deleterious effects of tobacco use on health**

- **The role of oral hygiene and other supplementary aids such as mouthwashes, balanced diet, etc., in preserving oral health to be accorded greater emphasis**
- **School managements must be instructed to hold mandatory health check up camps including dental checkups as a part of school activity**

**It's hoped that the above suggestions would be given the consideration they richly merit. IDA would be willing to render any assistance that the ministry may require.**

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