



Ask the Dentist

Got a question for a dentist?

If you have a question you would like answered by a Ministry of Health-approved dentist, send it to us at enquiries.anjar@gmail.com. This issue, your questions are answered by **Dato' Dr. How Kim Chuan** and **Dr. David Tan** of Imperial Dental Specialist Centre.



MISSING TEETH

My dad has four missing teeth. He's been told by his dentist to undergo implant procedures, but dad believes them to be overpriced. Are there other procedures which are able to fix or fill his missing teeth? What do these treatments entail and will they be expensive?

Koong, SS2

There are a few treatment options which your father can opt to replace his missing teeth. Those options are dental implants, bridges and removable dentures. Each option has its own pros and cons. Dental implants are actually the best option as it is permanently fixed into your bone jaw, which explains the price. A dental bridge is a fixed prosthesis where the missing tooth is replaced with an artificial tooth and is supported by the two teeth beside it. A bridge will span the area where teeth are missing. Conventional dental bridges can be made of metal or zirconia and may or may not be covered with porcelain. Bridges made of these materials will require trimming of the teeth beside the missing tooth. Resin bonded bridges, where the artificial tooth has metal wings and are bonded with the adjacent teeth, is minimally invasive, but only suitable for teeth that do not have a strong bite, such as front teeth. Patients with dental bridges must have good oral hygiene as plaque/food may get trapped underneath the artificial tooth, leading to gum disease or dental cavities on the natural adjacent teeth.

Removable partial dentures are the most cost effective, but the least comfortable, as a layer of metal/acrylic (plastic) will be covering some areas of the palate and gums. Dentures are not fixed permanently, and must be removed before sleeping. Prices for all these will vary depending on clinics, and which material/option your father opts for. Implants are the most expensive, followed by dental bridges and dentures. I recommend that your father visits his dentist again, and ask whether other treatment options are possible for him.

NO SWEET ENDING

My child is addicted to sweets. While I do try to reduce his sugar intake, there are times when I cannot monitor his diet. I am afraid that this addiction to candy will affect his oral health. What are the dental problems associated with sugar, and how can I get my son to eat less sweets?

Laurie, Klang

It is normal for children to like sweets. However, nothing is good if it is not in moderation. The main dental problem that your son will face is dental caries. Basically, acid is produced when the sugar in foods or drinks react with the bacteria present in the plaque. The stickiness of the plaque keeps these acids in contact with your teeth, and over time the enamel can break down, forming cavities.

We understand that it is difficult for some parents to control their children's diet. However, please do your best to regulate his frequency of snacking. Constant snacking will cause his teeth to be more susceptible to dental caries. You can start by keeping snacks/junk foods/sweets in cupboards out of his reach. Move on to avoiding buying those food and storing them in the house.

You may try to slowly reduce the amount of days in a week where he is allowed to have sweets. Replace those sweets with naturally sweetened fruits, and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are rich with vitamins and fibre which will help him to grow healthily.

Lastly, bring him for dental check ups to ensure he is free from any dental caries. Do not allow him to eat anything after brushing at night. We hope that you will find some of these tips useful.

