Indians do not take dental health seriously, says IMA

Sensitivity, teeth staining, cavities, and nursing bottle caries common among Indians due to lack of awareness

New Delhi, 20 July 2017: A study conducted recently has indicated that about 95% of Indians have gum diseases, 50% do not use a toothbrush, and 70% of children under the age of 15 have dental caries. It is alarming to note the high incidence of oral health ailments in Indians. Sensitivity is another major problem, with only 4% of those with the issue visiting the dentist for consultation. According to the IMA, Indians tend to indulge in self-treatment by avoiding certain food and drinks, rather than paying a visit to the dentist regularly.

Some of the most common dental problems among Indians are tooth sensitivity, staining of teeth, and cavities. This can be attributed to eating habits and other habits such as smoking. Consumption of alcohol and aerated drinks, and smoking can make the teeth lose their natural whiteness. Loss of enamel can also lead to sensitivity.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, “Dental health is often ignored by many people. Stress can have lasting effects on the teeth as on the overall system. Under stress, many people pick up the habit of smoking and consuming alcohol, which can have serious implications on dental health at a later stage. There is also a high prevalence of dental problems in rural areas due to lack of adequate knowledge. In cities, junk food and other lifestyle habits cause dental cavities and other issues. The increase in the consumption of refined sugars by way of processed food is also affecting the teeth negatively particularly in the younger generation.”

One should not ignore warning signs and visit a dentist as soon as possible. A dull tooth ache, which does not subside, bleeding gums, and sensitivity to certain eatables are signs that should not be ignored. Apart from adults, dental problems are also common in babies who drink out of a feeding bottle. This is known as Nursing Bottle Caries and can spoil the upper front four milk teeth.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Prolonged exposure to nursing bottles containing juices can cause caries in babies. Mothers should wipe the gums and teeth with a clean cloth after every feed. If left unchecked, dental infections can also lead to systemic diseases including cardiac problems.”

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Here are some tips to take care of your teeth and prevent decay.

- **Brush twice a day** Brushing helps in preventing the build-up of plaque and bacteria which can cause tooth decay and periodontal diseases.
- **Floss** Flossing helps clean the crevices where the brush can’t reach.
- **Avoid too much sugar** Sugary and starchy foods can cause tooth decay as sugar reacts with the bacteria in saliva to form an acid that erodes the tooth enamel.
- **Brush your tongue** The tongue harbors bacteria too. Therefore, it is a good idea to invest in a tongue scraper and clean it.
- **Don’t ignore any unusual signs** Consult a dentist if your gums are inflamed or if they bleed. It is also important to not ignore any pain in the teeth and gums.
- **Get your teeth checked every six months** Dental cleaning and check-up twice a year is imperative.

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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