

Caring for your teeth over the festive season

It is indeed a season to be jolly! As we enter into the festive season in the upcoming months, there will be plenty of parties, get-togethers and feasting. In this article, **Specialist Dental Group** highlights some festive season-related dental issues, and also handy tips for you in case of emergency!



Accidents from over-consumption of alcohol

We have attended to dental emergencies as a result of people walking into glass doors or falling on their faces after a night of drinking. We had a visit from a charming lady who broke her tooth when she was a little tipsy, and hit the glass door after losing her balance on her stilettos. In such cases, the reinforced glass door or tiled floor stays intact, but the teeth, lips and sometimes the nose are the ones which suffer the brunt of the damage. We have certainly stitched up enough lips and fixed many teeth as a result of that!



Eating-related incident

Special occasions call for special delicacies: turkey, ham and log cakes for Christmas; nuts, nian-gao (sticky rice cake) and pineapple tarts for Chinese New Year, and the list continues. While these are great for your palate, they may pose a challenge to your teeth. Cases of chipped tooth resulting from chewing on hard nuts or hidden pieces of bone in a big chunk of turkey are not uncommon, and brackets from braces have also been known to be dislodged during feasting. In addition, prolonged usage of dentures to chew on hard food may also cause discomfort due to wear and tear.

Periodontal (gum) problems and tooth decays are also common after the festive period - overworked teeth and gums, coupled with lesser time spent on brushing teeth is the almost-perfect formula for acute periodontal inflammation. Overconsumption of sticky foods and sugary drinks during this period also increases the risk of tooth decay.



Dental Pain

Frantic calls or emails are not uncommon on the eve of a holiday, especially when one is in unbearable pain and require urgent treatment at a time when most dental clinics are closed. In these cases, the issue is usually either an infection of the root or an infected and an impacted wisdom tooth.

There was an instance of a young lady who shortened her trip to Germany for the Christmas holidays and flew all the way back to Singapore just to seek treatment for a root canal infection. There were no dental clinics available in the city she was in as they were closed from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day. The pain was unbearable even after she popped pain-killers every three hours. Imagine how pleased she was after her treatment as she was all ready to party well before New Year's Eve!

One trend that we have observed over the years during the festive period is that when it comes to dental

emergencies - anything and everything could happen. In fact, it is one of the times where we encounter more emergency patients. This is why we ensure that we have a dentist available on stand-by, should a dental emergency arise.

Nonetheless, prevention is better than cure. Here are some simple and effective ways on how you can take care of your teeth this festive season!

 Brush your teeth 30 to 45 minutes after a sweet treat. Rinse your mouth with water after every snack.

 Reduce frequent snacking. Consume desserts and sweet drinks together with your meal.

 Use a straw when drinking sugary, carbonated drinks.

 Drink water before you feel thirsty and in-between snacks and meals.

 Avoid chewing on ice or using your teeth as a tool (e.g. to open beer bottles or crack crab shells).

 Visit your dentist twice a year to ensure that your teeth are in good condition.

Remember: maintaining your oral health is important and essential for your overall health, and to enjoy the festivities! Happy holidays!

FIRST AID TIPS FOR DENTAL EMERGENCIES

In situations where immediate professional help is not available, it is important to know some basic first aid tips to provide temporary relief and prevent the situation from worsening!

Displaced/ loose tooth

If the tooth is displaced forward, backwards or sideways, try to reposition it back to its original position immediately with your finger. Do not bite on it, and visit your dentist as soon as possible.

Knocked Out Tooth

You should handle a knocked tooth only by its crown and avoid contact with its root. It would be best to rinse it with cold milk or water. Position the tooth gently back in place (if there is a blood clot, push firmly). Biting on a folded cloth applies some pressure, which helps in repositioning. Do not scrape or scrub off any soft tissue on the root. Choose soft foods and avoid eating on affected tooth. Arrange a visit to the dentist as soon as possible.

Chipped Tooth

Do not try to piece back the chipped tooth. Instead, put it in a clean container with some milk or saliva and bring it to the dentist. If you experience any pain while breathing through your mouth or drinking cold fluids, do not self-medicate to eliminate pain symptoms. Bite on a clean, moist cloth for temporary pain relief instead.

Broken Dentures

Do not try to repair your denture with superglue as it is toxic. Instead, collect any fragments and try to fit them together before bringing them to your dentist. If any pieces are missing, look out for symptoms such as breathing difficulties as you may have swallowed or inhaled them.

Injured Lips/Tongue

Use a warm salt mouth rinse or an antiseptic mouthwash with chlorhexidine to keep the wound clean. Stop bleeding by applying pressure to the tooth with a moist gauze. Do not use dry gauze - it sticks to the wound, and bleeding continues once it is removed.

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Website: www.specialistdentalgroup.com

Contact: (65) 6733 7883