



## Promoting the Entire Family's Health; Key Roles of Good Oral Health and Healthy Diet

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**Received:** October 28, 2021; **Published:** November 30, 2021

Good oral health and healthy diet are essential to maintain optimal family health. While this notion is all too familiar, the concept isn't so well understood. But what is Family health? and what significance does good oral health and family diet have on it?

With several emphasis and extensive education given by dental and health professionals on importance of these two factors on individual's health, there seems to be a wide gap in individual compliance and care giver expectations. However, if there's one fact that has been proven, it's that good oral health and healthy diet are two great factors in achieving an optimal family health.

Let's try to know what the three main concepts in this article is about.

### Family health

According to U.S National Library of Medicine, Family health is the health status of the family as a unit including the impact of the health of one member of the family on the family as a unit and on individual family member.

It is clear from the above definition, the impact of an individual status on other family members. Be it Health status, social status, financial status, once an individual is found deficient in one, it's likely to directly affect the rest of the family members. Parents for instance are important role models for children, they also provide resources for health behavior and health care. Thus, children's behavior and health attitudes always reflect who their parents are and what kind of lifestyle they chose.

### Oral health

"Oral health is a key indicator of overall health, well-being and quality of life. It encompasses a range of disease and conditions that include dental caries, tooth loss, oral cancer, oral manifesta-

tion of HIV infection. Most diseases and conditions share modifiable risk factors with the leading non communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes)" WHO.

Oral health offers a clue about one's overall health. Normally the body's natural defenses and good oral health care such as brushing and flossing, keep bacteria infection under control. However without proper oral hygiene, this bacteria infection can reach levels that might lead to oral infections and also progress to other life threatening conditions in the body system.

### Healthy diet

Consuming a healthy diet throughout one's life course help prevents more than just malnutrition but all forms of life-threatening conditions. Recent studies shows how effective the right diet can also serve as cure to some illness. However, increased production of processed foods have gradually replaced the healthy food choices of vegetables and fruits and other dietary fiber such as whole grains. Unfortunately, these foods we resorted to poses greater risk and has been leading cause of many chronic illness in human body.

### Key roles of good oral health and healthy diet on promoting family's health

As discussed earlier, it all starts from an individual who in turn affect other members of the family. One of the factors that determine family health is Nutrition and food habits. Consumption of junks and high processed food affects the oral health as well as the general health of a person:

- Tooth loss, dental caries and gum diseases could result from high consumption of free sugars and food high in sodium. In turn, lack of good oral hygiene practices such as brushing, flossing or regular check up with the dentist pave way for free action of the bacterias in the mouth. As

it's well know that the mouth serve as main entry point to the body, the bacterias after build up finds their way into the bloodstream and cause build up which can leads to series of life threatening conditions such as endocarditis (infection of the inner lining of heart chambers), pregnancy and birth complications, eating disorders, diabetes.

- Coupled with bad food choices, an individual might become very limited in carrying out daily activities or becomes limited in functions in all aspects of life, thus affecting the other family members who can either be dependants or resolve to devoting their entire time and energy to taking care of such individual.
- Also, this could result in mental health conditions which might result from stress, worry and limited support from friends or family members. Slowly, the family as a unit began to drift apart as everyone has to survive leaving each member to his own fate.
- It becomes worse in case of children whose their parents serve as role model and provider. A parent with poor oral hygiene and bad food choices will directly influence the kids which could pose greater risk to them. Since they are young and they need healthy food to grow well and build up muscles and bones, thus in absence of healthy food and reliance on this processed foods exposed them to many life threatening conditions worse than adult own at such a young age. Also, complications or death of one of the parent that result from bad health choices might leave the children uncared for or traumatized them more experiencing what had happened to their parents.

#### Key practicalities in promoting entire family's health through good oral health and healthy diets:

- Individuals especially parents should be sensitized on their impact on other family members.
- Dental and other health professionals who takes on the educating role should lay emphasis on why individuals has to make healthy food choices and maintain good oral health. Practical examples should be employed here and the patient should be engage in an interactive discussion.

- Schools and communities based health programs should be improved and encouraged as it help increase students and people's awareness. Students especially children should be involved in story telling and demonstration on oral health, healthy food choices and how it can affect the family as whole.
- Regular visit to dentist and good oral health practices should be taught in schools and stressed at patient visit.
- Healthy food choices should be encouraged and importance should be stressed during patient visit or outreaches [1-7].

#### Conclusion

Maximizing health and well being, will help guide positive health behavior for future generations, therefore, every individual have a very important role to play in adhering to good health choices for themselves and other family members.

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Volume 4 Issue 12 December 2021

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