

Ask the Dentist

Got a question for a dentist?

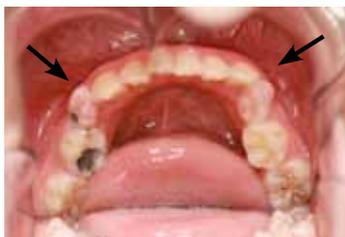
If you have a question you would like answered by a Ministry of Health-approved dentist, send it to us at enquiries.anjar@gmail.com. This issue, your questions are answered by **Dato' Dr. How Kim Chuan** and **Dr. Sucelia Han** of Imperial Dental Specialist Centre.

TEETHING WOES

My six-year old son is losing his baby teeth. Although most his baby teeth are falling out normally, his adult front tooth is beginning to erupt behind his baby tooth. This overlapping baby tooth is starting to turn brown and the adult tooth behind this baby tooth is erupting abnormally. I understand that my son will need to extract this baby tooth but I'm also wondering if he may or may not need braces later due to the abnormal eruption of the adult tooth.

Claire, Hartamas

It's normal for adult teeth to erupt lingually behind the teeth. Hence, as the permanent teeth starts erupting, the deciduous teeth positioned anteriorly will begin its root resorption process.



Arrows pointing to deciduous teeth.

After which, the deciduous teeth can turn reddish-brown and with time, it will exfoliate spontaneously without need for extractions. During eruption of the permanent teeth – following shedding – the natural outward pushing force created by the tongue against the teeth will then cause the teeth to erupt labially. It's recommended to have your son consult with an orthodontist for early assessment due to three reasons: insufficient space for permanent teeth to eventually erupt, likelihood of mild crowding which may require orthodontic intervention at a later age or the possibility of severe crowding which may warrant immediate orthodontic intervention.

To ensure orthodontic suitability, x-rays can be taken, allowing orthodontists to have better visualisation and predictions of your child's growth and development.

CROWDED HOUSE

I am a 28-year old professional who's planning to undergo Invisalign. I have very crowded teeth and have never experienced tooth extractions. If I were to undergo orthodontic treatment, will I need to extract my premolars or wisdom teeth? What are the benefits of tooth extraction, are they absolutely necessary, and what are the extra costs of this?

Kei, Bukit Tunku

Whether or not extractions are necessary depend on several factors. Such primary factors include the patient's facial profile as well as smile design. Other local factors comprise how much existing space is available, malocclusion, degree of crowding and upper and lower jaw discrepancies.

Dental extractions offer many benefits like crowding relief, malocclusion reduction, asymmetrical bite correction, as well



A patient who underwent Invisaligns without any need for extractions.

Picture courtesy of Dato' Dr. How Kim Chuan.

as an advantageous adjunct treatment for those who require corrective orthognathic surgery. In any case, an orthodontist will conduct thorough clinical and radiographic assessments before recommending extractions.

Invisalign treatment allows both the clinician and patient to view Clincheck videos which showcase predicted dental movements. This enables both parties to monitor movement progressions at any given time, providing us with visual treatment objectives. With such services, orthodontists can create two separate Clincheck videos, one showcasing treatment progressions with extraction and another, without. Should extractions be necessary, they will be charged separately.

WASH OUT YOUR MOUTH

I've never had the good habit of flossing and using mouthwash. I simply brush my teeth twice a day. What is the importance of adding mouthwash and flossing to my daily routine? I've tried mouthwash before and I absolutely hate the taste and intensity! What should I do?

Loo, Serdang

Mouths contain 10-50 billion bacteria. Therefore, one should follow good oral hygiene routines in order to maintain effective plaque control. Brushing – mechanical plaque removal – rarely achieves effective plaque control as it relies on user training, motivation and dexterity. Evidence even reveals that brushing only removes 42 percent of accumulated plaque.

Flossing is even more important than brushing as it's able to remove bacteria from tooth surfaces commonly missed during brushing. Regions where plaque and bacteria are missed by brushing and flossing can be eliminated with mouthwash. It can also dislodge and remove remaining food particles. Alcohol-containing mouthwashes can penetrate the bacteria's cell walls, rendering them inactive. Non-alcoholic mouthwashes usually contain cetylpyridinium chloride, which dissolves bacteria's cell membrane. If you don't like mouthwash's strong taste, opt for non-alcoholic mouthwashes, which are milder. Ideal oral hygiene routines include brushing, flossing as well as rinsing. To top that off, ensure you visit your dentist bi-annually as well.