

## CHAPTER NINE

### Miswak and science <sup>1</sup>

*O Allah (The Exalted) bless the One, the request for blessings upon whom grants mercy to young and old.*

#### **The effect of the extract of the Miswak (chewing sticks) used in Jordan and the Middle East on oral bacteria <sup>1</sup>**

Chewing sticks are commonly used in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in particular, and the Middle East, Asia, and Africa in general, in addition to many other areas for oral hygiene, religious and social purposes. Recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended and encouraged the use of these sticks as an effective tool for oral hygiene. The antibacterial activity of one of these sticks has been tested against some oral aerobic and anaerobic bacteria. Three methods of diagnosing antibacterial activity were carried out: streaked plate method, ditch plate method, and tube dilution test for minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC). It was found that the extract of these sticks had a drastic effect on the growth of *Staphylococcus aureus*<sup>2</sup> with MIC values of 69 mg/100 cc, while a variable effect on other bacterial species was noted. It is concluded that using chewing sticks twice a day on a regular basis may reduce the incidence of gingivitis<sup>3</sup> and possibly dental caries<sup>4</sup>. Apart from their antibacterial activity which may help control the formation and activity of dental plaque, they can be used effectively as a natural toothbrush for teeth cleaning. Such sticks are effective, inexpensive, commonly, available, and contain many medical properties.

#### **For memory**

'Ali, Ata and 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them all) states that, "Miswak strengthens a person memory, cures headaches, relieves the veins in the head, gets rid of plague, strengthens the eye sight, keeps the life healthy and helps digest food, increases intelligence, helps increase in family lineage, helps staying healthy in old age and strengthens the stomach." The small wicks bend to the appropriate shape to get plaque and leftover food out from in between teeth while avoiding any damage to the gums.

The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) taught us more than 1,400 years ago to use the Miswak to clean our teeth and mouth and give it a nice scent. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) quoted the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as saying: "Whenever the Angel Gabriel (upon whom be peace) would visit me, he would advise me to use the Miswak." The leftovers of food found between teeth provide an excellent environment for the festering of millions of bacteria, which can lead to painful and bloody gum disease and cysts<sup>5</sup>. In the worst cases, there can be inflammation of the jawbones.

Bacteria also produce damaging enzymes<sup>6</sup> that eat away at the calcium of the teeth, which causes cavities<sup>7</sup>. In severe cases, the bacteria produce gases that emit nasty stench from the mouth. Recent studies have found that Miswak has natural minerals that kill microbes and germs and remove plaque. The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to rub the Miswak over his tongue, teeth and gums. Abu Musa Al-'Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I visited the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the Miswak was at the edge of his tongue." One should use a Miswak as the saliva that is created from using the Miswak relieves illness and oral ulcers have been cured through this method.

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume One, Chapter Twenty for this Sunnah

<sup>2</sup> A genus of gram-positive non motile spherical bacteria occurring in grape like clusters.

<sup>3</sup> Inflammation of the gums caused by plaque on the surfaces of the teeth at their necks.

<sup>4</sup> Decay and crumbling of the substances of a tooth.

<sup>5</sup> An abnormal sac or closed cavity lined with epithelium an filled with liquid or semisolid matter.

<sup>6</sup> A protein that, in small amounts, speeds up the rate of a biological reaction without itself being used up in the reaction.

<sup>7</sup> A hollow enclosed area. Hole in a tooth.

### **Miswak before sleeping**

A Doctor from Washington once advised Hakeem Muhammad Tariq Mahmood to use a Miswak before sleeping. He asked the reason for this, the Doctor said, "Today's research shows that Plasma<sup>8</sup> cannot be removed just by rinsing the mouth after food." Plasma works more active during the night when we are asleep as our mouth is not active. He also said; "It does not make any difference whether toothpaste is used in the morning or not, however, make sure you perform Miswak at night."

Praise be to Allah (The Exalted) that it is the Sunnah of our Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) that at night he would perform ablution (Wudhu) and would not perform ablution without the use of a Miswak.

Every key practice of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has so many benefits. The Sunnah is an important preventive health measure which essentially reduce diseases in an individual. If people realised the benefits of following the Sunnah and practised them in the correct manner with the correct intention not only will Allah (The Exalted) and the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) be pleased but we would be a healthier nation.

### **Miswak cures infections**

A businessman, Dilbar Mansoor once visited Switzerland. He said, "When I met a new Muslim, I gave him a Miswak as a gift. The new Muslim placed this Miswak to his eyes (out of respect) and tears fell. He took out a towel from his pocket in which was wrapped a tiny Miswak approximately 2 inches". The new Muslim said, "When I embraced Islam I was given this as a gift, I would use it with due care and this is what is left from it, you have done me a great favour". Then he said, "I had a continuous infection in my teeth and gums which could not be cured by the Doctors. I started to use the Miswak and after a short time I went to see the Doctor who was very surprised to see that I was cured". He asked me, 'What medicine I was using?' I said, "Only the medication you prescribed." 'It is not possible', the Doctor said, 'to be cured in this short time! Just think carefully what you have used.' I thought carefully and realised that I had used the Miswak. When I showed the Doctor the Miswak he was surprised and started new research.

Centuries have passed but the best medicine was prescribed by the best being who came with the final message. Allah (The Exalted) sent such a Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) that will enlighten the followers with many benefits for our problem till the last day.

### **Heart problems**

Hakeem S.M. Iqbal writes, a patient came to him whose Veins were infected; continued medical help could not cure him. Finally the patient had an operation to clear the pus, but unfortunately the infection came back again in a short time. He came to see me and I checked his gums which were badly infected and that was affecting his heart. The Doctors who had tried to help him initially agreed with my diagnosis. First he received medical treatment to his gums and was given a Miswak from a Peelu tree, as soon as he started using this the patient realised the problem began to heal, *Subhanallah!*

### **Taste buds**

A person could not taste anything he ate no matter what type of food. Different kinds of medicine were given to him to try to cure this illness but none was effective to the extent he had to have leeches placed on his tongue (even that did not help). He was then told to use a fresh Miswak made from a Peelu tree and all praise be to Allah (The Exalted) it worked. He could taste his food again. The patient said, "A Miswak is heavier than thousands spent for that is what cured me when all those medicines were useless."

### **Throat infection**

A patient had an infection in the throat which was very painful and swollen; gradually he was losing his voice and was also suffering from memory loss and dizzy spells. He was under many brain specialist and physicians but their medication had no effect. Eventually the patient was given a Miswak that had been boiled to gargle and some medication to apply on the throat. All praise be to Allah (The Exalted) the patient was cured very soon. It was revealed that the patient had an infected thyroid which had an effect on all the body; once the infection was cured his body was at peace.

### **Ear infection**

Some patients had infections in their ears, such as swelling and pus. Many medicines had been used but made no difference. After research it was found that the patients' had pus in their gums and when the

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<sup>8</sup> The straw coloured fluid in which the blood cells are suspended.

infection in the gums had been cured the other problems had been cured. Miswak is an antiseptic<sup>9</sup> when used; it will free the mouth of any germs. Those who perform this Sunnah are saved from many diseases of the body to the extent there are some germs which can only be cleaned and killed via the use of a Miswak.

### **Brush or Miswak?**

Ever wondered why the Miswak is better than a toothbrush? Even though both are supposedly used to clean our teeth! Well let me tell you, after many years of research it is shown that after the brush is used the first time it becomes hazardous to one's health. Reason being, a bed of germs settles each time it is used. Even if washed with water the germ multiplies. The toothbrush also removes the natural brightness and whiteness of the teeth, not only that but sometimes minute or in some cases bigger gaps are created in the teeth making it easy for food to get caught in between them and which in turn gives room for bacteria to grow. Also people complain about yellowing of the teeth but by using a Miswak the yellowing of the teeth will disappear and the natural shine will be restored.

Oral hygiene is a billion pound market. New products are introduced regularly; however, Miswak is better than any of these products and inexpensive.

### **Chemical Breakdown of A Miswak**

Miswak has 19 beneficial ingredients in it. Most important among them are:

1) Antibacterial acidic inhibitors that fight decay and diarrhoea. They are natural disinfectants and can be used to stop bleeding. They disinfect the gums and teeth and close any microscopic cuts that may have existed in the gums. On first usage, the Miswak will taste harsh and maybe even burn, because of a mustard-like substance found in it, but this is the ingredient that fights decay in the mouth and kills germs.

2) Minerals such as sodium chloride, potassium, sodium bicarbonate and calcium oxides. These clean the teeth. For instance, the American Dental Association considers sodium bicarbonate to be a preferred ingredient in toothpastes.

3) Natural scented oils that taste and smell nice, give the mouth a nice smell. They make up about 1% of the Miswak.

4) Enzymes that prevent the build-up of plaque that causes gum disease. Plaque is also the number one cause of premature loss of teeth.

5) Anti-decay and anti-germ ingredients that act as a penicillin of sorts, decreasing the amount of bacteria in the mouth, which means cleaner teeth and cleaner air when breathing through the mouth.

Some researchers have found that tooth decay is rapid when a dry brush is used, and that wetting one's toothbrush mitigates the damage. So the Miswak should be dampened before usage. If there is no alternative, one's saliva will suffice to dampen the stick. Miswak also has chemicals that cause the mouth to produce extra saliva, which is the mouth's organic defence and cleaning mechanism.

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<sup>i</sup> University of Wales College of Medicine, Dental School, Periodontology Department, Cardiff, UK.. 1995 June. Al lafi T, Ababneh H.

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<sup>9</sup> It prevents the growth of bacteria. It thoroughly cleans and free from germs.