

The Islamic way to healthy teeth and gums.

The miswak, a Muslim's natural toothbrush, was found to be smooth, safe and purgative to clean the mouth with, according to research conducted by Abdul Al Shareif, Saudi Ministry of Agriculture.

The miswak is widely used in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in accordance with the strong recommendation by Islamic Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

In his research, Al Shareif explained Miswaks contain anti mouth ulcer substances, and anti septic, which have similar effects to penicillin.

In addition to the miswak's substances that prevent teeth carries, gum bleeding, mouth cancer and putrefaction, it has another substance that strengthens the gum, and prevents the teeth from coloring.

It also contains smell scents, painkiller substances and sodium bicarbonate, which is a preferable formula in the manufacture of toothpaste.

The miswak is easy to carry and keep clean and can be used anytime of the day, as some Muslims like to clean their mouth with it before salaah (prayers).

It reaches inside the mouth, and gets in to gaps between the teeth without hurting the gum.

"God likes us to be clean all the time, as it says in the Qur'an. And I think those who brush their teeth before prayers like to get clean, before praying" said Ahmed Omrah, Imam of one of Jeddah's mosques.

In his study, Dr Al Shareif also clarified that the miswak is best used while it's fresh and soft. Its used end must be removed daily. The miswak must be always be kept clean from dust. The miswak tree, which is from the family of Salvadoraceae, is planted in the warm climate of many places of Saudi Arabia. Most of its farming is in the south coast.

The miswak tree, which is relatively short, 1-4 meters in height is permanently green around the year. Miswak can be taken from miswak tree branches or from the roots of the miswak tree. The later one is more effective and preferable to users. A reasonable size for use is about 15 to 25cm and it is finger shaped, the research pointed out.

Miswak have a big market in Saudi Arabia and users can find them in stores that sell Islamic books and cassettes, close to mosques. Muhammed Sufiani, a retired 65 year old teacher, who has never visited dentist in his life, explained how he maintained his strong teeth.

"I always carry my miswak. After eating i immediately clean my mouth, usually it takes me seconds. I also keep misawaks in my house and have taught my children and grand children to use miswak." said Sufiani.

According to Ibrahim Al Hedraiti, who has a Miswak farm in Shaqah, a little village about 190km south of Jeddah, miswaks sell the best during the month of Ramadaan. Shaqah is famous for planting the highest quality of miswaks in the region. There are two varieties that are cultivated: Nasham is always green and the other, Rak, has a spicey taste and its outer layer is brown.

"Most famers here plant miswaks. It has always been good business, as our farms supply the Kingdom's demand" Al hedraiti added in his statement.

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