



# Healthy Smiles for a Healthy Lifestyle

By Dr. Jeff Haddad

## Are your child's teeth as healthy as they can be?

Dentistry has changed drastically in the past couple decades, and all for the better. This is especially true for children growing up in today's dental world. I am routinely asked by parents about the benefits of fluoride and if dental sealants "really work". Obviously, parents want the best for their children, but because things have changed since they were children, these new recommendations are often quite foreign. My goal in this month's issue is to educate parents on what they should be providing their children at home, and what kind of services they should expect from their dentist to keep their children's teeth as healthy as possible.

When I was in dental school it was thought that the most important time to use fluoride was while the teeth were forming. Although systemic fluoride is important in developing strong teeth it is now known to be more important to have topical fluoride on the teeth after they develop to prevent cavities. The greatest benefits can be seen when small amounts of fluoride are constantly maintained in contact with the tooth via saliva. Thus, adults also benefit from fluoride, rather than only children, as was previously assumed.

What does this mean for you and your children? Fluoride treatments that are recommended to you, especially for your children, are extremely important to the overall health of teeth. In our office, we have chosen to utilize fluoride in a varnish form due to its ease of application and little to no taste. The varnish is painted directly onto the teeth and holds the fluoride in close contact with the teeth for many hours. Our patients tend to prefer this method because they can eat and drink immediately following the application.

Another crucial treatment that was not available when I was growing up is the placement of dental sealants. In my opinion, this simple procedure truly changed dentistry for the better. Dental sealants act as a barrier, protecting the teeth against decay-causing bacteria. The sealants are usually applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth where decay occurs most often. We utilize sealants that also release fluoride after being placed, which continues to protect the treated teeth. If sealants were available when I was growing up, I would most likely have avoided the majority of my dental work. Please consider fluoride and sealants a huge benefit when your dentist offers it, regardless of your insurance plan. Both procedures cost a fraction of what a filling would cost. This necessary treatment could be the difference in protecting you and your child's dentition from cavities, and future dental work.

Home care is obviously just as important in this "battle" against tooth decay. Key ingredients in preventing tooth decay and maintaining a healthy mouth are twice-daily brushing with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste; cleaning between the teeth daily with floss or interdental cleaners; eating a balanced diet and limiting snacks; and visiting your dentist regularly. I also recommend over-the-counter fluoride rinses at night for people who are more prone to cavities.

## Dental Tip of the Month

***Want to learn more about the latest in dentistry?***

***Dr. Haddad is featured every week on the radio show "Simple Truths for Healthy Living" with Dr. Joseph Canu. Listen to Dr. Haddad every Wednesday night at 10:30pm on 103.5fm.***



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*Dr. Haddad and Dr. Doolin lead a practice of 10 that focuses on cosmetic, implant and neuromuscular dentistry, as well as general dentistry for children and adults. For more information, please visit [www.rochesteradvanceddentistry.com](http://www.rochesteradvanceddentistry.com) or call (248) 656-2020.*