



All About Silver Diamine Fluoride

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EXPERT CONTRIBUTOR

You may have heard about a new treatment, Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF), from friends or neighbors. Or you may have had it used on your child's or even your own teeth. I want to use this column as an opportunity to share the science behind SDF; why I use it in my practice and when; and to answer some common questions.

What is Silver Diamine Fluoride?

Silver Diamine Fluoride is a liquid that contains particles of silver and fluoride. It is applied using a tiny brush or special floss to cavities to help harden the decayed tooth structure and kill the cavity-forming bacteria.

What is SDF used for?

SDF is used to "arrest" or harden up and stabilize an active cavity. When SDF is successful, the cavity turns black and hard. The SDF kills the bad bacteria that cause the cavity and helps to prevent the cavity from growing or spreading. It is often easier to place a filling or crown after SDF has been used because the hard black arrested cavity does not always need to be removed. It can help a dentist to preserve more of the tooth. On some occasions, the tooth might not need to have a filling placed and can be monitored. Sometimes SDF can also help delay the need for cavities to be filled.

Which patients can benefit from SDF?

SDF can be used on any patient without a silver allergy or open ulcer or sore. It is very helpful for young children who can't tolerate having cavities filled. It is also helpful for elderly adults and for patients with special health care needs. It can be used on very sensitive teeth if the sensitivity isn't coming from a deep cavity. It can also be used to stabilize a cavity before dental care is done.

What teeth can SDF be placed on?

SDF is often very helpful on teeth that have small to medium sized cavities. We avoid placing SDF on teeth with infections or deep cavities that extend very close to or into the nerve. SDF works best when we can apply it directly to the cavity, either using a brush or special floss.

What are the risks of SDF?

SDF should not be used for patients with allergies to silver. This is a rare allergy. SDF should also not be used on patients with sores or ulcers in their mouth until the sores heal. An SDF-treated cavity can still go on to grow and may need future dental treatment. There have been no major health risks or severe reactions to SDF reported.

What are the downsides to using SDF?

STAIN! SDF will stain cavities very dark black, unfortunately. Although it does not stain healthy teeth, the cavity will turn black and stay black permanently until it is filled, has a crown placed, or falls out. SDF will also stain clothing and skin. If a child gets SDF on his or her lip, it will cause a temporary stain like a henna tattoo. This stain will go away in a few days.

Should I have SDF placed on my child's cavities?

This is an individual decision between you and your dentist. It will depend on your child and his or her cavities. It may depend on whether staining will be bothersome, how young your child is, and whether he or she is very anxious. Please call us if you have questions about SDF for your child!

Keep those fangs in good health!

Where can I go to find out more information?

You can call us! Dr Richman is happy to discuss SDF with you and your child. You can also go to the AAPD website to learn more: http://www.aapd.org/media/Policies_Guidelines/G_SDF.pdf

This article is for general information only and is not intended as medical or dental advice. Please seek medical and dental care with you or your child's medical or dental provider for specific questions.



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