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New Dental Devices Help Spot Cavities

Even if you're up on your dental hygiene, the odds of living a cavity-free life are not in your favor. Learn about new tools that can help spot cavities earlier than conventional methods.

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BAKERSFIELD, Calif. -- If you cringe at the mere thought of going to the dentist, three new tools may help your next visit. The tools help dentists minimize, even avoid, the need for drilling away tooth decay, KERO 23 reported.

"Because of hidden decay, you can go through your life without noticing any cavities until it's really damaged the tooth," Dr. Ramin Tabib said.

The Diagnodent device uses a laser to illuminate, or fluoresce the tooth.

"If it's a healthy tooth, the tooth does not fluoresce. But if it's a tooth with a decay, it fluoresces. And that fluorescence comes back through the unit with a number," Tabib said.

And the higher the number, the greater the decay, according to KERO 23.

Another tool now available is the Difoti fiber-optic digital imaging system.

"It sends a safe light through the tooth and illuminates the whole tooth, and areas that are decayed, the light does not penetrate well through it, and it shows up on the computer screen," Tabib said.

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Last but not least, the cavity risk test, or CRT. It measures the patient's saliva production and uses samples to measure levels of two cavity-causing bacteria.

"The saliva is actually put on a culture dish and the culture dish is specific for these two bacteria that can cause the cavities," Tabib said.

High levels along with low saliva production may signal the need for cavity countermeasures to prevent problems down the road and help reverse the ones already in progress, KERO 23 reported.

"Sealants are placed in certain areas where cavities are not formed yet, but they're in great risk of forming at some point," Tabib said.

Other new cavity-fighters include fluoride varnishes and long lasting, bacteria-busting rinses. These new dental tools can reveal cavities before they show up on dental X-rays.

And unlike X-rays, they do not expose patients to any radiation. But, experts say, they should not replace X-rays as part of a complete dental exam.

Additional Resources:

- [Academy of General Dentistry](#)
- [American Dental Association](#)
- [Cavity Risk Test Information](#)
- [Difoti Digital Imaging System](#)

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