

# Dentistry Without Drills or Needles?

by **Scott F. Kenward, DMD**

Is it possible to go to the dentist and never feel the drill or the pinch of the dreaded needle? In the high-tech office of the modern dentist it most definitely is possible. Here's how.

It's called *air abrasion* and it's intended to replace the dental drill and the need for anesthesia in many dental procedures.

Air abrasion, a technique of MicroDentistry, is a bit like microscopic sand blasting. A concentrated stream of air is combined with a super fine powder to remove tooth decay without having to use a drill. And because there's no drill, there's usually no need for anesthetic. Although dentists these days pride themselves on delivering completely comfortable dentistry, we know that some people are still nervous about the drill and needle. For these people, air abrasion is nothing short of a miracle.

## **What is MicroDentistry?**

MicroDentistry is the philosophy and practice of detecting and treating decay as early as possible, of removing as little tooth structure as possible, and of making the smallest possible restorations that are esthetically pleasing and long lasting.

Thanks to its precision and gentleness, the air abrasion unit allows us to treat decay at an earlier stage without as much removal of healthy tooth material, thereby helping to preserve the strength of the tooth. Teeth treated this way may be less likely to require crowns in the future. Smaller fillings are less susceptible to wear and may last longer.

## **Does it Work for All Types of Fillings?**

Unfortunately, no. *Deep* decay still requires more conventional treatment. Air abrasion is best for early decay and for sealing the pits and fissures on the biting surfaces of teeth.

Air abrasion also works well in the following procedures:

- Repairing chipped, fractured or worn teeth
- Preparing teeth for cosmetic dentistry
- Removing stains and spots
- Repairing old fillings and sealants
- Repairing broken crowns and bridges

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## **What Does it Mean to You as a Patient?**

The air abrasion system creates a cavity surface that is ideal for use with tooth-colored (composite) fillings, so we can place those fillings faster than ever before. In some instances, using the air abrasion unit actually allows us to complete your treatment in fewer visits.

The aspect of the air abrasion that many patients appreciate most is its comfort. The system greatly reduces heat and vibration, two sources of discomfort traditionally associated with fillings. That's why this system is often used without anesthetics. This also enhances our ability to treat patients who are pregnant or medically compromised. With air abrasion, we can often treat children without the two things they fear most - the needle and the drill.

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