



Immunization awareness

A vaccine for cavities? It might be worth a shot

August is National Immunization Awareness Month, which got us thinking: Wouldn't it be great if you could wipe out your risk for cavities as easily as you protect yourself from the flu or chickenpox? It's a possibility scientists have been examining for decades, trying to come up with a vaccine to protect people from tooth decay. After all, no one loves shots – but aren't they better than an hour under a dentist's drill?

Unfortunately, we're not quite there yet. While there has been promising research in recent years, a cavity-prevention shot isn't likely to hit the market tomorrow. Instead, your best bet is to care for your smile with the tried-and-true techniques dentists recommend. You can't go wrong with daily flossing and brushing, using products that contain fluoride and visiting your dentist for routine cleanings, X-rays and other preventive treatments.

Sources: *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, *NPR*, *Popular Science*

Trivia time:

How many people in the United States have no teeth?

Answer: About 5 percent of adults ages 20 to 64, according to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.

3 ways your dentist keeps germs at bay

When you're headed to the dentist for a checkup or a filling, the last thing you want is to go home with an illness or infection. That's why your dental office takes steps to protect patients and staff.

National infection-control guidelines for dental offices include the following:

- > Using gloves and other **protective gear** to block germs
- > **Sterilizing equipment** to prevent the spread of disease
- > Rigorous **hand washing** or hand sanitizing to protect from infection

Sources: *Delta Dental*, *CDC*, *Academy of General Dentistry*, *American Dental Association*

How your dentist's office protects you from disease

Dental treatment may involve contact with blood and spit. That means there's a risk of illness passing between patients and staff. Diseases that might be transmitted this way include hepatitis, flu and other illnesses. To reduce this possibility, experts recommend that dental workers get vaccinated for diseases including:

- > Hepatitis B
- > Influenza
- > Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)
- > Pertussis (whooping cough)
- > Varicella (chickenpox)

If you're concerned about these illnesses, ask your dentist's office what steps it takes to protect staff.

Sources: *CDC*, *American Dental Association*

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