



# Flouride holds risks

by George E. Meinig, DDS

Dear Dr. Meinig: I am concerned about giving fluoride drops to my baby (15 months), even though I am told by pediatricians that it is important to do so. Can 3 drops of fluoride a day store up in the baby's system? Would appreciate your views on this matter -- have both friends and family with babies who are also concerned.

Look forward to your column. Keep up the excellent work.

L.S.

Dear L.S.: My opinion agrees with yours. I do not believe in giving fluoride to babies or adults.

The public is quite aware that this is contrary to the advice of the American Dental and the Medical Associations. They feel that the reduction in tooth decay that results justifies the risks, and that these are minimal or non existent. Most medical and dental nutritionists, however, do not agree that the risks justify the means.

What then are the objections that I find in using fluoride? The first is that chronic fluoride toxicity causes dental fluorosis. This is a white chalky spotting that occurs to the structure of the tooth during its development. These areas, as one gets older, turn dirty gray and brownish.

Proponents admit such defects occur in 10 to 15% of the children who are given fluoride. This chalky spotting of teeth is actually a defect in the normal structure of the tooth substance. It is much like a fire in a forest. If the tree is not killed by the fire, one can later see the damage it afflicted on the rings of the tree. I find it hard to believe if fluoride does this to a hard structure that some other problems are not likely occurring to our other soft tissues. Research in this regard had been pitifully inadequate.

IT IS STATED that many areas of the country have one part per million and even more of fluoride occurring naturally in their water supplies. This is true, but in nature it usually occurs in the form of calcium fluoride while sodium fluoride is what is put into water supplies. Chemists say there is no difference, that the fluoride ion is the same. I believe there is synergistic activity in normally occurring environments, that total effects on the body are not the same. Most proponents also say that fluoride makes the tooth harder. This is not true, it actually makes them softer.

Any dentist who has taken care of cavities in people from high fluoride areas (yes they still get cavities) as I did in Texas during the war know that they are much easier to cut with the dental drill. The mottling disfigurement of the teeth that occurs in one out of ten is something the victims abhor and would give anything to correct.

This chemical, fluoride, is also known to be an enzyme poison that affects a number of important metabolism activities. For example its effect on the enzymes that help us utilize phosphorus actually interferes with the utilization of carbohydrates in a manner somewhat similar to the lack of insulin in the diabetic. It is not easy to discuss how these enzymes affect food and its digestion but more is being studied.

Decay of teeth is primarily a result of dietary indiscretions. To stop this process by artificial means may reduce tooth decay but what about all the other health problems that these bad dietary habits produce? I have found those who use fluoridated waters or treatments in the dental office usually think it is now

okay to eat all that junk food because their teeth won't decay. That isn't how it works. The best reduction figures are 40% less decay. That means instead of six cavities one would have two or three. However, if sugar use is increased the number of cavities would go up in proportion.

DR. JOHN LEE AND the Marin County Medical Association researched the amounts of fluoride in average dietaries and found most people were getting more in their food than the recommended one part per million. Therefore adding it to water resulted in more than what is considered optimal. Then, too, some people drinks lots of water while others do very little thus varying the amount ingested. Why doctors recommend the control of a disease by a method that doesn't control dosage baffles me no end.

There are many other issues on both sides of this question of the use of fluoride. Being one of the first dentists involved in the practice of preventive dentistry makes it difficult to go against the altruistic fervor of my dental association and its desire to reduce the decay problem. Their motives are admirable but in my opinion are unfortunately in the wrong direction with the wrong vehicle. Stopping decay the proven way....via proper nutrition pays dividends not only in dental health but in general health.

Dear Dr. Meinig: If most of our food is converted by the body into sugar, what is so bad about eating sugar? Isn't that an easy way to supply our needs? D.D.

Dear D.D.: You are correct that most food we eat is converted into sugar and that it is the body energy fuel. Food that is converted by our digestive system, however, is glucose, a simple sugar. Though similar, it is quite different chemically than the sucrose (table cane sugar) you eat and is hidden in your foods.

The total amount of sugar in all of our blood at any one moment is only two teaspoonsful. What happens to a system that is geared to exist on this small amount when one eats a piece of pie a'la mode that contains a whopping 18 teaspoonsful of sugar?

Obviously some clever "back ups" exist to handle the shock of such a jolt to the system. In the beginning it is the pancreas that initiates control by putting out a charge of insulin. This controls the excess sugar by sending it to the liver where it is converted into glycogen and stored. If a total of more than 10% by weight of sugar is present in the liver, the overage is then converted into fat. When the system gets out of hand as it does in the diabetic, the excess sugar is kicked out by the kidneys into the urine.

NATURAL FOODS DO NOT contain such large concentrated volumes of sugar, thereby calling for less drastic and heroic action by our glands, giving the system more time to adequately handle its digestive role. Stating that sugar ingestion would make it easier fails to take into consideration that it is necessary for food to supply over 40 different essential items to our fuel needs, not just sugar calories. These 40 items comprise all the carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals that prove so important to cell life. When one ingests pure table sugar they are not supplying any of these other essential cell necessities. The empty sugar calories rob our tissues of these other fuel items that are needed to keep us functioning normally while providing only energy factors. We still need all the other ingredients to keep us perking properly.

Everyone has a question about nutrition. Send yours to: Dr. George E. Meinig, D.D.S., c/o OVN, Box 277, Ojai, CA 93023.