

Dental Doings

Advances In Dentistry Benefit Patients

(NAPSA)—Dentistry today is quite different than it used to be 150 years ago when the American Dental Association (ADA) was first formed. Sink your teeth into these techniques and materials used by today's dentists to treat patients:

Air abrasion: Air abrasion can be an alternative to traditional dental drills. Primarily used to treat small cavities, it directs a fine stream of particles at the decayed portion of the tooth, preserving healthy tooth structure. The particles are made of silica, aluminum oxide or a baking soda mixture and can access hard-to-reach areas between the teeth. For treating shallow cavities, air abrasion can reduce the need for a local anesthetic.

Whitening: Teeth whitening is one of the most popular dental procedures. Whitening can involve a chemical process that changes the natural color of teeth or a physical or chemical process that removes only surface stains. Dentists perform whitening treatments in their office and offer patients kits to whiten their teeth at home. In addition, there are a variety of over-the-counter whitening products available to the public. The ADA recommends consulting with a dentist before whitening your teeth to make sure your mouth is healthy enough for your teeth to be whitened.

Dental Implants: Dental implants are an option for replacing damaged or missing teeth. Surgically placed into the bone below the gums, implants fuse to the jawbone and serve as a base for individual replacement teeth, bridges or a denture. Dental im-



A dentist specializing in endodontics performs a root canal to save a tooth. In the past, dentists didn't have the instruments necessary to perform complicated dental surgical procedures.

plants can make a smile look and feel very natural. In addition, some people find the secure fit of dental implants to be more comfortable than other tooth replacement options.

Composite Resins: Today's tooth-colored dental fillings are made from composite resins. They are strong and durable, and because of their natural look, composite resins have become increasingly popular in recent years.

Future Advancements

There are exciting advances on the horizon such as salivary diagnostics, where patients will simply provide a sample of their saliva to screen for genetic predisposition to diseases such as breast cancer and diabetes. There is also the future possibility that teeth can be regrown using stem cell technology. For more information on how to care for your teeth and gums, visit www.ada.org.