



Biodentine is applied to the cavity to replace the dentine layer

Getting to the root of the problem

An innovative product can help avoid root-canal treatment and extractions of decayed teeth

The patient in Nick Williams' dental surgery is there for a six-month check-up. Nothing remarkable about that you might think as Mr Williams completes a scale and polish. But there is an extraordinary story here. A year ago his patient was suffering from sensitivity and discomfort in her back molar. An X-ray had revealed wear and tear and deep decay. But thanks to innovative dentistry and a unique restorative material called Biodentine™, the pain has disappeared.

The brainchild of Septodont, a French family-owned pharmaceutical company, Biodentine has the ability to stimulate remineralisation of the dentine. And according to Mr Williams: "Where a cavity is so deep that it exposes the nerve, Biodentine can potentially keep the nerve alive, helping to prevent the need for root-canal treatment or extraction."

However, Mr Williams, who co-owns the Lime Tree Dental Practice near Bristol and has been using Biodentine for eight years, is keen to point out that it is not "a miracle cure that will work for every patient in every situation".

He explains: "We do see patients suffering from the consequences of advanced stages of decay, such as pain or abscesses, when root canal or extraction are the only options. But where possible, we want to try to avoid these more invasive treatments."

"If the tooth is still alive – meaning it's still responsive to a cold test – and if X-rays show that there's no infection around the tooth, we'll offer the patient Biodentine as a dentine replacement treatment.

"In a small number of cases, the Biodentine doesn't work. However, we've found that Biodentine works well in the majority of patients. Our research shows that many of those who opted for Biodentine in very deep cavities, still have healthy and responsive teeth eight years later."

But curiously, not all dentists choose to use Biodentine, a product which is supported by hundreds of independent research papers and has been available to use in UK surgeries since 2010.

This is strange, particularly when you consider its many benefits. For example, dentists don't require any special training, nor do they need any new equipment to begin using it. From a cost standpoint, it's no more expensive than some other dental materials and, best of all, it's 100 per cent mineral, which means it contains no metals, no filled resins, nor does it release any harmful by-products.

So why don't more dentists make use of Biodentine? Mr Williams thinks that many are simply unaware of it, while others are reluctant to make the change. But he is in no doubt that treating his patients with Biodentine "makes good clinical and economic sense for both NHS and private dentists".

Mr Williams, who also teaches undergraduates at the University of Bristol community-based dental teaching unit, admits he had doubts at first. "It seemed too good to be true," he says. But, as a member of the University of Birmingham PREP Panel, which takes an active interest in the development

of dental materials, his initial scepticism didn't last long.

A volunteer crew member for the RNLI at the Portishead lifeboat station, he explains: "I've been using Biodentine for over eight years and treated hundreds of patients with it, always after discussing outcomes with the patient and obtaining their permission. In my experience, it has delivered everything that it has promised. I've seen first-hand how Biodentine can help a decayed tooth, with a deep cavity, to heal before laying down an extra layer of defence against future decay."

Audited over the first two years of use, Mr Williams says that "80 per cent of his patients have avoided further treatment such as root-canal surgery or extraction, when reviewed over three years".

Now that has to be good news for patients and dentists alike, and a compelling reason for any dentist not currently using it to give it a try. So why not ask your dentist about Biodentine from Septodont?

For more information please visit www.septodont.co.uk

