

The Cavity Process...Stain to Decay

You have been going every 6 months for a Hygiene Visit and you brush, floss and scrape your tongue at least twice daily! So, why is it that one day you go in to see your friendly Hygienist and the Dentist looks up and says... hmmm...you have a few cavities that we need to treat. In your mind, you are thinking what I just wrote... "I've been doing everything I've been told, so why do I all of a sudden have cavities?" Let me try to explain!

A 'Cavity' or 'Decay' or 'Caries' is the invasion of the Enamel of a tooth surface that progresses, in time, through the Enamel and into the Dentin (inner layer) of the tooth. Since we all know that cavities are formed because of lack of effective oral hygiene or lack of frequent Dental Hygiene visits, let's focus on the process of Cavity formation and how a Preventive approach can lead to a Painless, Effortless, Less Costly, and more Predictable outcome! We have tackled effective Oral Hygiene in our previous discussions.

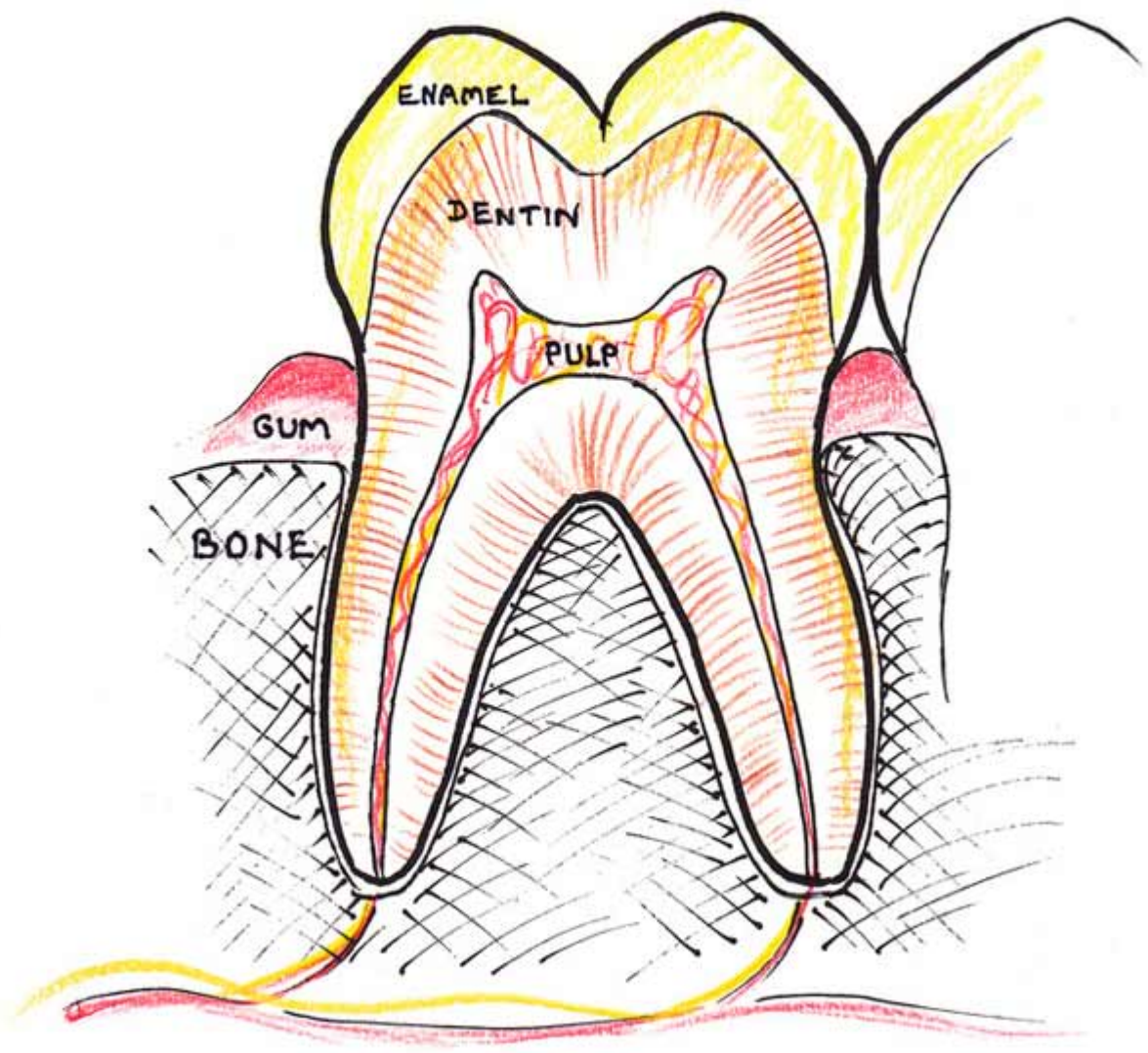
Grab a mirror, open your mouth (make sure you have adequate lighting) and look closely. Do you see any stains or dark spots on the chewing surfaces of your teeth, or for that matter, anywhere on your teeth? These areas should be closely evaluated by your Dentist. Today, Intraoral cameras are an amazing technology that magnify your teeth so you can see exactly what the Dentist sees, and better! Both you and the Dentist can see how some stains or dark spots are just that...stains, while others are Cavities in progress.

Shallow or light stains are probably just food or drink stains that over time have entered the grooves of the teeth and are just areas that need to be cleaned at home and watched by your Dentist to make sure that those same areas that trapped the stains don't trap Enamel-invading bacteria!

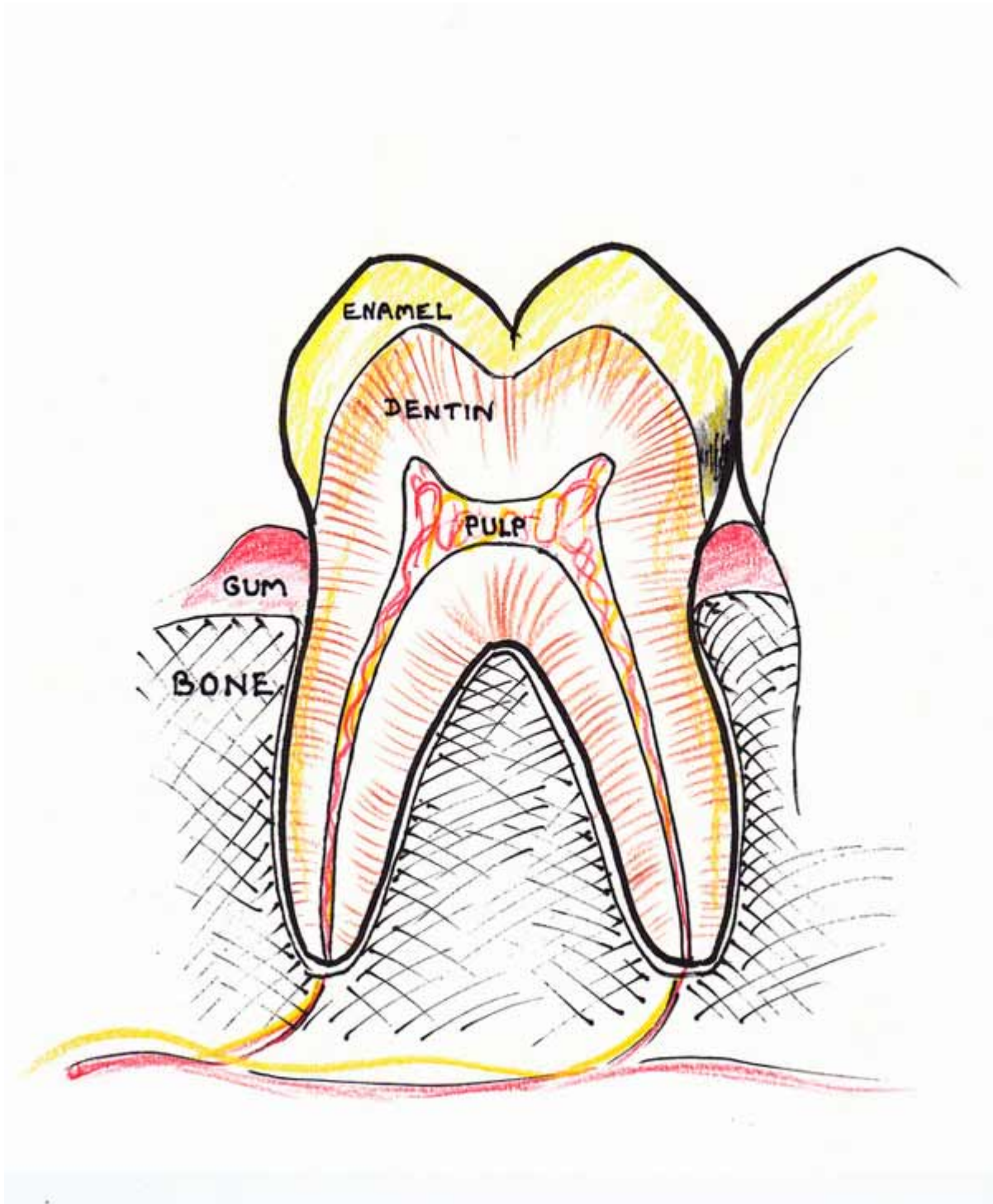
Deeper or darker stains may warrant a closer look. These areas more than likely are trapping bacteria that are in the process of invading the Enamel on the way to the middle of the tooth... The Nerve! On xray, sometimes your Dentist can spot these areas as dark triangles with the point of the triangle pointing inward toward the tooth! Think of it as an army of bacteria that grow and grow until they get to their Destination, the Nerve of the tooth!

So, you see, if your Dentist and you can catch these areas well before the Dentin is invaded, then the process of removal of the bacteria is simple, does not require needles or shots, is relatively painless, and certainly less costly. Remember, "it's less painful and less complicated to preventively treat based on a preventive diagnosis, then it is to wait for things to break, then treat".

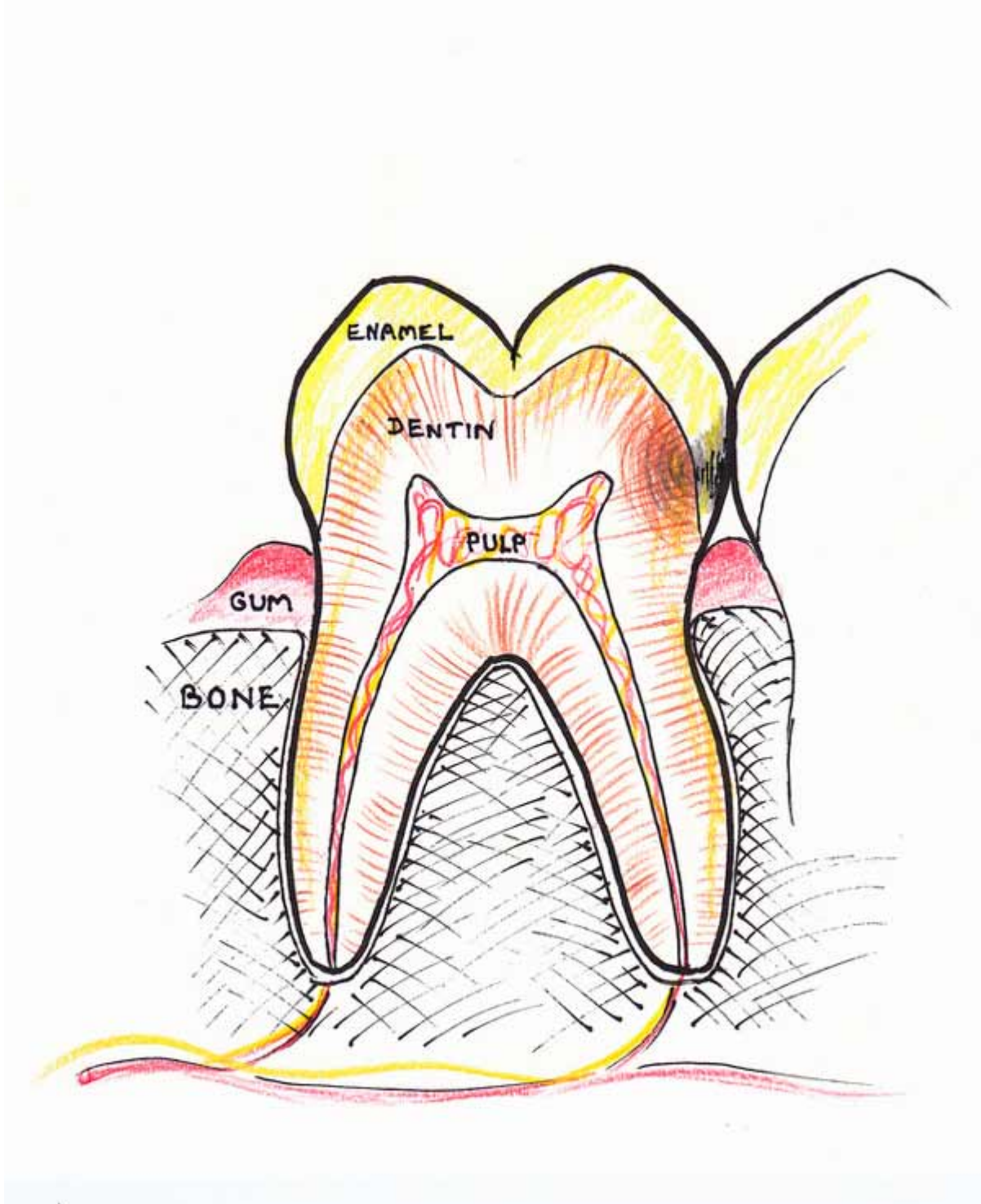
The following pictures depict progression of Decay and hopefully you realize, even more now than every, how important it is to visit your Hygienist and Dentist at least every 6 months to maintain the health of your teeth and to promote Preventive Diagnosing and Treatment!



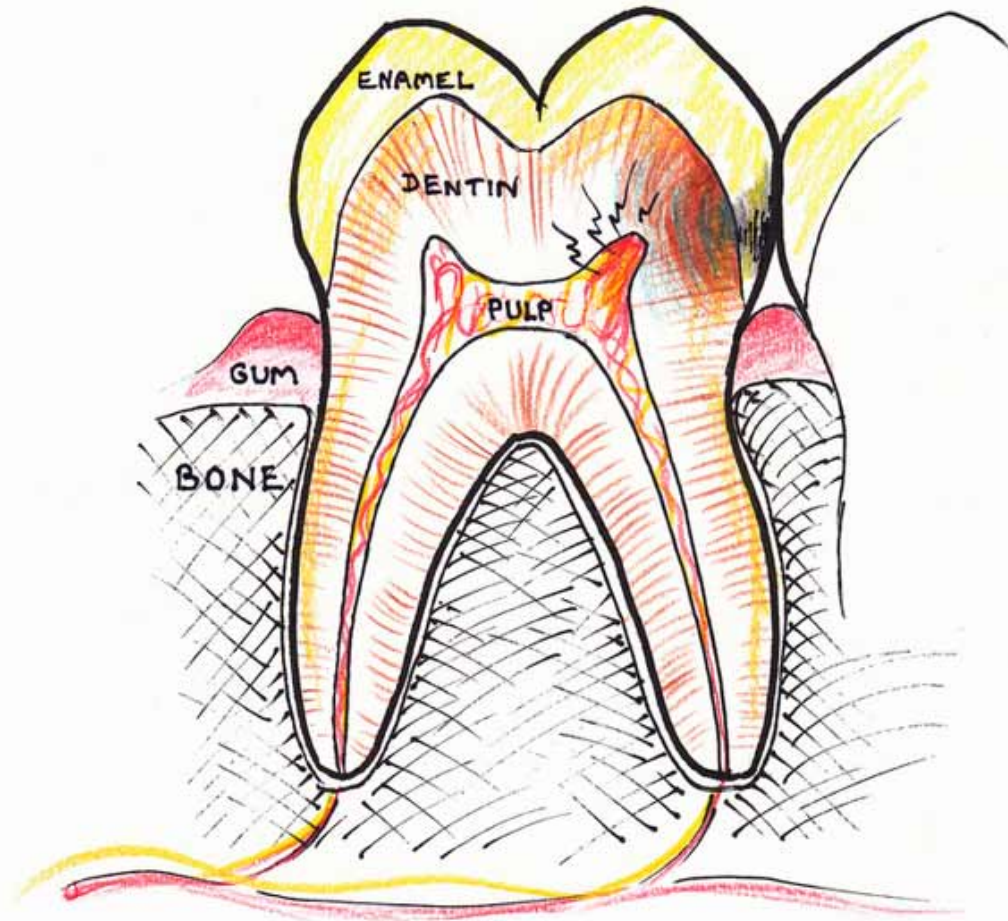
HEALTHY TOOTH



CAVITY STARTING IN ENAMEL



CAVITY INVASION OF DENTIN



THE NERVE HAS BEEN BREACHED