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FURTHER EXTENDING THE USE OF HOWE'S AMMONIACAL SILVER NITRATE IN CONTROL OF DENTAL CARIES

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DISCLOSING PROXIMAL CARIES

Rationale:

ADOLESCENT (growing period) caries is of the white, invisible type. This is the time in life when caries is most active and when damage is done, which, unless checked by vigorous effort, leads to complete wrecking of the teeth. Much of our efforts in prevention have been by the wrong approach. We have been searching for cavities. We should prevent the very thing for which we are looking. Prevention, if it is prevention, prevents the cavity. Our first line of defense, therefore, is to prevent the cavity.

contact, we have two potential cavities. Each erupting tooth adds to these potential cavities. This technique is especially indicated for these anterior permanent teeth, for the simple reason that we have no satisfactory filling for them. Silicious cements are very disappointing. Baked porcelain inlays and gold-foil have their objections. Prevention, of all places, is paramount here. This technique will disclose cavities when they cannot be detected by any other known method, not only disclose them, but, by a most fortunate coincidence, immunize them.

The plaque provides protection for the aciduric organism until the etching oc-

This part of our technique aims at just that.

Every smooth-surface cavity begins in an etching. First an acid, then an etching, then a cavity and then either a filling or a lost tooth. If the damage has reached the stage where we may see it or where the explorer will detect it or, worse still, where the x-ray will reveal it, it is too late for anything but a filling. We must attack the problem nearer its inception. We must get in before enamel dissolution has taken place. The ideal thing, of course, would be to prevent the acid. The whole problem of dental caries rests in that one thing. We are able, however, with this technique, to enter the picture at the acid-etching stage and prevent the cavity.

As soon as the two permanent upper central incisors erupt and form proximal

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ears in the enamel surface. From this stage the organisms are able to get protection by lodging in the interstitial spaces in the etching. After they are housed beneath the surface, there is small chance for dislodging them by friction from either floss or toothbrush. How logical, therefore, to account for the immunity which comes about when these interstitial spaces are filled with the germ-killing silver particles. The same tooth form and proximal relations which made possible the formation and protection of the plaque now give protection to these deposited silver particles in exactly the same location.

Many people between twenty-five and fifty years of age have what appears to be immunity in their upper anterior teeth. When this solution is applied, etchings will usually be found. A relative im-

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