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Dental Articles EGYPT, Tuesday, November 18, 2003.

### Latest advances in dental treatment assures pain free visits

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By [Jim Stern](#)

When Austin Webster learned at the age of 8 he needed to have his first cavity filled, he was not unlike most boys his age.

"He was scared," his mother Tammy Webster said. "He was begging me not to make him have the cavity filled. He kept telling me his tooth was fine."

Now, a week later, Austin is begging Mom to take him back to the dentist to have his remaining two cavities filled.

"He thinks its cool and awesome," said Webster, of Taunton. "He's been going around to all his friends to show his tooth off. He loves it."

Austin had his cavity drilled and filled using a new Waterlase procedure, which for Austin was pain free. The new procedure is said to allow dentists the ability to fill cavities faster, safer and according to most kids, without the pain associated with anesthesia needles and metal drills.

The procedure, only available in a handful of Massachusetts dentist offices, is available at the office of Dr. Mark Turner of Taunton. Turner began using the new laser program a few months ago and vows never to go back to the ancient drilling routine.

According to Turner, the service uses a high-powered stream of water to drill teeth and gums. The water spray, which looks like a bright laser beam, is pain free, as the spray serves as a natural anesthetic, Turner said.

The procedure replaces the drill, as the laser is able to cut through teeth the same way a metal drill would. The laser can also be used on root canal and gum treatment procedures.

"The first time we used it we were a little skeptical," Turner said. "We were amazed, as all of our patients said they didn't feel a thing."

Turner said in addition to the procedure being pain free, it is also an improvement over the mechanical drills, as the water offers a "jagged-like" cut, allowing fillings to settle into the tooth easier. Additionally, Turner said fillings are less likely to fall out of a tooth with the Waterlase's jagged cut.

Turner said the procedure can also perform oral biopsies.

The procedure is not without some hindrances. The procedure does not work with metal. As a result, adults who in the past had their cavities filled with a metal filling cannot benefit from the Waterlase procedure unless the old fillings are replaced.

Turner has begun removing the old fillings and replacing them with a cleaner, metal-free filling.

The Waterlase laser treatment machine also requires a significant investment for dentists. Turner said the machine cost more than \$50,000.

Most insurance companies cover all cavity fillings where the Waterlase procedure is

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**used.**

**For Austin, the procedure was everything he hoped for. Turner never used anesthesia and Austin was able to play in his baseball game only minutes after his cavity was filled.**

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