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Health

BY ANN ALLISON

PEARLY WHITES

The usual treatment for teeth badly discolored by food, tobacco or drugs is the expensive and painful capping procedure. But a Georgia dentist claims three to five bleaching treatments do the job as well in 75 percent of all cases.

"Bleaching can be an economical and almost painless alternative to the full crown (cap)," says Dr. Ronald E. Goldstein, of the Emory University School of Dentistry in Atlanta.

Bleaching agents can lighten the teeth and, in some cases, reduce or wipe out dark yellow or orange-brown stains in teeth.

His technique utilizes bleach that has been activated by heat and light. He told the annual meeting of the American Dental Association that "tooth lightening of at least one to two shades" can be accomplished in this way and touch-ups may be done to keep the teeth white.

PLUG THOSE TUBES

A Philadelphia doctor, Theodore P. Reed, has successfully tested a fast, easy, nonsurgical method of female sterilization. The procedure can be done in less than an hour in a doctor's office and may be completely reversible, according to *Medical World News* magazine. Reed, chief of gynecology at Iankena Hospital, has tested the method on 101 women in the past year; only one became pregnant.

This winter, about one thousand women will undergo the procedure in ten medical centers as part of a large-scale test.

The new technique involves the injection of silicone—a jellylike plastic—through the vagina into the fallopian tubes. In the tubes, the plastic hardens into a plug that stops the egg's journey from the



HAVE THOSE PEARLY WHITES GONE YELLOW? HERE'S HELP!

ovary to the womb.

According to Dr. Reed, "no recovery period is needed; there is no injury to the tubes and no harmful effect."

Modification of the procedure has corrected an early problem—abnormal plugs that backed into the womb when the material failed to solidify quickly enough.

Dr. Reed said he has not yet removed any plugs from patients in an attempt to restore fertility. But a special, premolded "retrieval" tip implanted in the silicone has made removal possible—back through the vagina—in test animals. They were later able to become pregnant.

X-RAYS AND CANCER

The breast appears to be the organ most susceptible to radiation-caused cancer among women of childbearing age, says National Cancer Charles Land.

Dr. Land told a National Conference on Breast Cancer in New York that several studies support the conclusion, and that the risk of breast cancer from radiation exposure increases proportionately

with the total amount of radiation that is received.

The degree of risk is the same, he added, whether the total radiation dosage comes all at once or in small amounts over an extended period of time. Neither the type of radiation nor a family history of breast cancer is a factor in excess risk from radiation exposure. Even those usually at low risk for breast cancer, such as the Japanese, have the same degree of risk as those with normally higher rates of the disease.

SPERMICIDE COMEBACK

Until the IUD and the Pill became popular, spermicides were one of the major methods of contraception used in the United States. Now, with the increasing concern over the safety and comfort of metal or plastic devices and hormones, there is evidence that sperm-killing creams, jellies, foams, foaming tablets and suppositories are making a comeback.

According to Drs. Samuel Coleman and Phyllis Piotrow of the Population of Information Program (PIP) at Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public

Health, fewer than 5 percent of all female contraceptive users currently choose spermicides.

However, drug industry sources report growing sales, the researchers note, adding that better packaging, clearer instructions and wider availability in stores would further increase the popularity of spermicides.

Among other advantages, say Drs. Coleman and Piotrow, spermicides have no known internal side effects or local reactions. They can be purchased without prescription or medical exam. When properly used, these contraceptives are more than 95 percent effective. (Among American women using contraceptives, according to a 1976 survey, 15 percent of spermicide users got pregnant within twelve months compared to 2 percent of Pill users, 4 percent of IUD users and 10 percent of condom users.)

"The major problem," says Dr. Piotrow, "is not a failure of the product itself, but a failure of the user to apply the product correctly and above all, consistently."

Some of the major disadvantages of spermicides are: They have to be used shortly before each incident of intercourse, women must wait several minutes in some cases for the tablets to dissolve, and certain sexual positions—those that increase the chance of the chemicals spilling out of the vagina before they do their job—should be avoided.

Still, says Dr. Coleman, with improved ingredients and better guidance about their use, "spermicides can undoubtedly play a larger and more useful role in meeting the world's need for a safe, effective and acceptable family planning method."

PIP, in its current issue of *Population Reports*, lists almost forty spermicide preparations. ■