

## NEWSLETTER

### Importance of Vitality Testing

- Pulp testing to assess the pulpal status of a tooth is **vital** prior to any type of restoration.
- The pulp of a tooth may be necrotic, however the radiograph may appear totally normal. Remember: a significant amount of periapical bone loss needs to occur before we can detect a radiolucency on a radiograph (Seltzer + Bender).
- Various ways to test vitality include: cold test, heat test, electric pulp test, cavity test.
- Our method of choice for assessing vitality is a cold test using a #2 cotton pellet sprayed with 1, 1, 1, 2 tetrafluoroethane (Endo-ice) for 10-30 seconds. This produces a temperature drop of -50C.
- Tip: Make sure that you apply the pellet to the cervical region of the tooth which is typically closer to the pulp. Also, test a control tooth to assess the patients “normal” response first.
- Studies show that this type of vitality test is about 90% accurate (Pettersson '99). False negatives can occur with calcified pulp chambers.
- Also, recent studies show that this type of testing produces a significant temperature drop in teeth restored with gold, PFM and all ceramic crowns, and is a reliable method of pulp testing in this situation (Miller '04).

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