Chocolate Toothpaste? Extract of Tasty Treat Could Fight Tooth Decay

Released: 5/16/2007 2:55 PM EDT
Source: Tulane University

Newswise — For a healthy smile brush between meals, floss regularly and eat plenty of chocolate?

According to Tulane University doctoral candidate Arman Sadeghpour, an extract of cocoa powder that occurs naturally in chocolates, teas, and other products might be an effective natural alternative to fluoride in toothpaste. In fact, his research revealed that the cocoa extract was even more effective than fluoride in fighting cavities.

The extract, a white crystalline powder whose chemical makeup is similar to caffeine, helps harden teeth enamel, making users less susceptible to tooth decay. The cocoa extract could offer the first major innovation to commercial toothpaste since manufacturers began adding fluoride to toothpaste in 1914.

The extract has been proven effective in the animal model, but it will probably be another two to four years before the product is approved for human use and available for sale, Sadeghpour says. But he has already created a prototype of peppermint flavored toothpaste with the cavity-fighting cocoa extract added, and his doctoral thesis research compared the extract side by side to fluoride on the enamel surface of human teeth.

Sadeghpour's research group included scientists from Tulane, the University of New Orleans, and Louisiana State University's School of Dentistry.

Sadeghpour will earn his PhD in bioinformatics and a master's in computer science from Tulane University on May 19.