



Dental Care: Visiting The Dentist

Regular checkups can help you keep your teeth cleaner, maintain your overall health and prevent painful problems from developing.

A simple routine of brushing and flossing, in addition to regular dental checkups, can be enough to help prevent tooth decay, gum disease and bad breath.

Why Visit the Dentist?

Your dentist can not only determine the health of your teeth, mouth and gums, but can also make conclusions about your overall health. Oral exams are important to determine any oral diseases and conditions you may have that can affect your overall health, such as:

- Bad breath or bleeding gums can be a symptom of adult-onset diabetes.
- Bruxism, or the grinding or clenching of one's teeth, is a telltale sign of stress.
- Sometimes the tissues in your mouth may change. For example, red spots on the tongue can point to immune system-related disorders.
- A dental X-ray can alert a dentist to possible osteoporosis if bone loss is seen on the X-ray of a tooth.

How to Select a Dentist

Here are some tips for choosing a dentist in your area:

- Ask your friends, family members and co-workers who their dentists are and who they would recommend.
- Schedule a consultation to meet the dentist and staff in person.
- Ask for the dentist's credentials and test his or her knowledge by asking questions.
- Start with something simple such as a cleaning.
- Make sure you feel comfortable with the dentist and the dental office.

What to Expect

Your dentist will likely perform the following at your routine dental visit:

- A full examination
- A thorough cleaning
- X-ray of the teeth—Depending on your insurance plan, this may not be covered so make sure to find out beforehand.

When Should You Go?

Seeing a dentist twice a year is recommended for most people. However, people with very little risk of cavities or gum disease can usually see their dentist just once a year, while people with a high risk of problems might need to see the dentist every three or four months for optimal care.

Remember, maintaining good oral hygiene is one of the most important things you can do for your teeth and gums.