
How to take care of your Teeth and Reduce your Dental Bill



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The key to reducing dental costs is prevention. There is a lot that you can do to avoid serious dental problems and we are here to help.

The Importance of Regular Visits

Regular dental checkups are an essential part of any prevention program. If you see your dentist regularly, any dental problems you have can be treated in their early stages. If you see a dentist only in an emergency, when you already have a serious problem, treatment may be much more costly. In the long run, nothing is more economical than the regular dental checkup.

Periodically, your dentist may ask you to have an X-ray examination. X-rays help your dentist find hidden conditions that can threaten your oral or general health. Treating these conditions at an early stage often prevents more serious damage and the need for more expensive treatment later.

Why does your dentist want to schedule another appointment with you so soon - even if today's oral examination was perfect? Regular dental visits are essential to maintaining healthy teeth and gums. For maximum benefit, a good home care regimen must be supplemented with an examination at least every six months. Depending on the status of your oral health, your dentist may recommend more frequent visits.

Several months after cleaning, teeth can have plaque build-up as well as stains from food, beverages, tobacco, etc.

Over time, plaque build-up can harden into tartar (or calculus) formation.

Checking your teeth for decay is only a small part of a thorough oral exam. During each visit, your dentist (or dental hygienist) will also: check your gums (gingiva) for inflammation, tooth mobility and pockets; examine your mouth for indications of possible cancer, diabetes and vitamin deficiencies; and note any irregularities in your facial

structure, bite, saliva and temporomandibular joint (TMJ). Your dentist or hygienist will clean your teeth and encourage you to maintain good oral hygiene.

The Regular Dental Visit

At every regularly scheduled dental appointment, your dentist examines your teeth, gums, mouth and throat. A regular dental visit at our office also include the following:

HEAD & NECK EXAMINATION

- The Cancer Exam
- Facial Structure Exam
- Palpation of Chewing Muscles
- Palpation of Lymph Nodes
- Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ)

CLINICAL DENTAL EXAMINATION

- Periodontal Exam- including gingiva, periodontal pockets
- Mobility of Teeth
- Mucous Membranes
- Saliva (or lack of it)
- Occlusion (Bite)
- Decay of Teeth
- Broken Fillings
- Erosion
- Removable Appliances
- Contact Between Teeth

DENTAL CLEANING (PROPHYLAXIS)

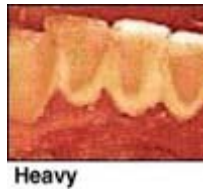
- Assessment of Mouth Cleanliness
- Scaling
- Polishing
- Flossing
- Oral Hygiene Instructions

After completing the clinical dental exam, your dentist might outline a detailed treatment plan, if necessary, and indicate when you need to return for a follow-up visit. Regular preventive maintenance of this type, along with a thorough home care regimen, helps assure your good oral health.

What a prophylaxis (professional cleaning) does that you can't do for yourself?

A prophylaxis is a scaling and polishing procedure performed to remove normal plaque, calculus and stains. While the main objective of the prophylaxis is to help prevent gum disease, it can also improve the appearance of your teeth by making them look clean and bright. Scaling is performed using instruments to remove calculus from the teeth. Polishing with a special paste by means of a motorized instrument removes remaining plaque and surface stains caused by various foods, beverages and tobacco. Polished tooth surfaces make it more difficult for plaque and debris to accumulate.

The photograph below shows tarter or calculus build-up



Let's look at some preventive techniques to avoid many dental problems to begin with.

PROPER BRUSHING

Proper brushing helps minimize the risk of tooth decay and gum disease, the major causes of tooth loss. Use a soft-bristle brush and an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste to remove plaque and food particles. Replace your brush every three months.

Next page shows proper technique on how to brush and floss properly for best results.

You may experience sore or bleeding gums for the first several days you floss. If bleeding continues after the first week of flossing, call your dental professional. If you have trouble handling floss, ask your dentist about the use of a floss holder, or other types of interdental cleaning aids.

For more information, don't hesitate to call our office at [510-796-1656](tel:510-796-1656). Also visit our website, www.smileplusdentistry.com for more information on oral care.

For Better Results, Brush and Floss Properly



How to brush:

1. For thorough but gentle cleaning, use a soft toothbrush.



2. Hold your brush at a 45° angle. Begin by brushing the outside of the front teeth. Use gentle, half-tooth wide, back and forth strokes.



3. Next, brush the outside back teeth, starting along the gumline.



4. Inside back teeth. Use short, angled brush strokes.



5. Inside front teeth. Tilt the brush vertically, use an up-and-down motion.



6. Chewing surfaces. Hold the brush flat. Use a gentle motion.



How to floss:

1. Wind 18" of floss around your two middle fingers.



2. Gently guide the floss between teeth.



3. To remove plaque and debris, gently move the floss up and down against the tooth.*



4. As you move from tooth to tooth, use a fresh section of floss each time.

* Or use another interdental cleaning device.

Be sure to follow the special home care instructions provided by your dental professional.