

## The Dental Checkup: Your Door to Better Health

*Some may think that if they take care of their teeth with regular flossing and brushing, that visiting a dentist is not important if they don't have any dental problems. However, there are a number of reasons why regular checkups should be part of everyone's oral hygiene regimen.*

### Early Intervention

Preventive checkups provide dentists with opportunities to identify and intervene early in dental diseases.

For example, a dentist can detect gum disease, but without a dental checkup, the disease can progress to more serious stages, possibly resulting in pain, tooth loss and other problems. If caught early through a dental checkup, gum disease is manageable and, in some cases, can be reversed.

### Oral Cancer Screening

Dental exams include screening for oral cancers and other health issues that may be difficult to spot on your own.

Dentists can readily see symptoms that could indicate serious health problems elsewhere in the body that need attention.

Dentists may recommend visits twice a year, while some patients may need to be seen on a quarterly basis. Check with your dentist to determine the number of yearly visits that is right for you.

### Cleaning Your Teeth

During your teeth cleaning, your dentist or hygienist will use a scaler, a small metal instrument, to scrape off tartar above and below the gum line.

An ultrasonic vibrating device may also be used to shake loose plaque and tartar. Your dentist or hygienist will then polish your teeth and finish up by flossing. The smooth tooth surfaces make it more difficult for plaque to accumulate.



### Examining Your Teeth

After your teeth are cleaned, your dentist will examine them for signs of decay, using a metal probe and a small mirror with an angled handle.

Swelling, redness, and deep pockets in the gums are all signs of gum disease. Your dentist will test how your upper and lower teeth come together and will look for evidence of tooth grinding or problems with the lower jaw.

### Long-Term Savings

Preventive checkups can save you money in the long run. In fact, every dollar you spend on preventive care such as brushing and cleaning should help save you money later in restorative care and emergency procedures.