

Cleanings



What is basic dental care?

Basic dental care involves brushing and flossing your teeth regularly, seeing us for regular checkups and cleanings, and eating a mouth-healthy diet, which means foods high in whole grains, vegetables and fruits, and dairy products.

Why is basic dental care important?

Basic dental care:

- Prevents tooth decay.
- Prevents gum (periodontal) disease, which can damage gum tissue and the bones that support teeth, and in the long term, can lead to tooth loss.
- Shortens the time needed during checkups and makes the trip more pleasant.
- Saves money by prevent tooth decay and gum disease and the need for fillings or other costly procedures.
- Helps prevent bad breath. Brushing and flossing removes bacteria that cause bad breath.
- Helps keep teeth white by removing staining from food, drinks, and tobacco.
- Improves overall health.
- Makes it possible for your teeth to last a lifetime.

Are there ways to avoid dental problems?

- Keeping your teeth and gums healthy requires good nutrition and regular brushing and flossing.
- Brush your teeth twice a day usually in the morning and before bedtime and floss once a day. This removes plaque, which can lead to damaged teeth, gums, and surrounding bone.

- Use a toothpaste that contains fluoride. It helps strengthen teeth and prevents tooth decay and cavities. Mouthwashes that contain fluoride or one with ingredients that fight plaque can be helpful. Look for toothpastes that have been approved by the American Dental Association.

- Avoid foods that contain a lot of sugar. Sugar helps plaque grow and feeds acid producing bacteria that cause decay.

- Practice tongue cleaning. You can use a tongue scraper or a soft bristle toothbrush stroking in a back-to-front direction. Tongue cleaning is particularly important for people who smoke or whose tongues are coated or deeply grooved.

- Schedule your checkups based on how often you need examinations and cleanings.

When should my child start seeing a dentist?

The American Association of Pediatric Dentists recommends that your child sees a dentist before his or her first birthday or 6 months after the first primary teeth appear, whichever comes first. After the first visit, schedule regular visits every 6 months. If your baby has dental problems caused by injury, disease, or a developmental problem, then give us a call right away.

Routine Checkups

We will recommend how often you should have routine checkups. We generally recommend them every 6 months. We will examine your teeth and gums for signs of tooth decay, gum disease, and other health problems.

- Your dental hygienist will begin to clean by taking any necessary x-rays. We will want to take x-rays once a year unless there is a specific reason to take them more often. The x-rays will take only a few minutes.

- They will place a heavy apron on your body to shield you from the x-rays. We use a digital x-ray system which delivers a very small amount of radiation.

- They will have you bite down on a small piece of plastic. This will help align the teeth properly for the x-ray machine. They will repeat this process several times to get pictures of all your teeth.



- Your dental hygienist and dentist will decide if a regular cleaning is indicated and, if so, the hygienist will begin to clean your teeth by scraping hard mineral (tartar) off of your teeth with a small metal tool or an ultrasonic instrument. If periodontal disease is detected and a deep cleaning is indicated, then we will reschedule you for the deep cleaning procedure.

- Your hygienist will floss your teeth, use a polishing compound, and apply fluoride. Cleanings usually aren't painful, but can be if there is abundant, tenacious tartar present.

- If needed, we will put a sealant on the chewing surface of your back teeth to help prevent cavities. Sealants keep food and bacteria from getting stuck in the rough chewing surfaces or grooves of your teeth, and they protect your teeth from plaque.

- Your hygienist may apply a fluoride solution directly to your teeth to help prevent tooth decay. We may recommend a series of fluoride applications.

- If you are prone to infections, or if infections are particularly dangerous for you, you may need to take antibiotics before you have some types of dental work. You may need to take antibiotics if you:

-- Have certain heart problems that make it dangerous for you to get a heart infection called bacterial endocarditis.

-- Have an impaired immune system.

-- Had recent major surgeries or have man-made parts, such as an artificial hip, knee, or a heart valve.

- If you have active tooth decay or gum disease, we will talk to you about changing your brushing or flossing habits. In severe cases, we may recommend antibiotics, special mouthwashes, or other dental treatments. If your teeth and gums appear healthy, we will recommend that you continue your usual brushing and flossing.

- We will also screen you head and neck areas for abnormalities as well as perform an oral cancer screening at each checkup.