

Do You Really Need To Go To The Dentist Every 6 Months?



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If you brush and floss everyday, do you really need to see the dentist twice a year?

YES! Even Dentists, Hygienists, and Dental Assistants get their teeth cleaned every six months.

Combating The Plaque

Brushing and flossing at home cannot get off all the plaque (the soft stuff) and tartar (the hardened-on stuff), even if you think you are doing a meticulous job. The plaque and tartar are bacteria that begin to accumulate on your teeth, gums and tongue just minutes after you are done brushing. And even though you're brushing and flossing, there is some that will stick around. That's where your hygienist will come in handy. The hygienist can get in the hard to reach places, get

all the build-up off and assess the health of your gums and bone. If you are someone who is prone to getting build up, it may be suggested that you have your teeth cleaned more frequently, such as every 3 months. Leaving the plaque and tartar will cause bad breath and lead

to gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) and possibly periodontitis (loss of bone that holds in your teeth). Believe it or not, what is going on in your mouth can effect what happens with the rest of your body. These bacteria can make their way into your blood stream and can cause problems. Studies show links between periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease, low birth weight/pre-term birth babies, and diabetes.

X-Rays Are Important

Your doctor and hygienist will probably take some x-rays also. There has been a lot in the news lately about dental x-rays causing tumors. First off, the tumors that the studies refer to are non-malignant, which means they are not cancerous. Second, the studies have suggested a link between cumulative x-rays exposures and these non-cancerous tumors, but the researchers agree that it is nothing conclusive. Researchers

agree there is not a cause-effect relationship. According to Dr. Michael Schuller, a neurosurgeon, "The chance of these tumors arising in patients who were x-rayed yearly was low."

Detecting Oral Diseases

According to the American Dental Association, "Many oral diseases can't be detected on the basis of a visual and physical examination alone, and dental x-rays are valuable in providing information about a patient's oral health such as early-stage cavities, gum diseases, infections or some types of tumors." According to the American College of Radiology, four bitewing x-rays, which is common for a routine exam, give about .005 millisieverts (mSv) of radiation which is almost equivalent to the radiation you get in a normal day in the sun. Another x-ray is the panoramic x-ray (which goes around your head) and it has about twice that radiation. Digital x-rays cut down this exposure between 40-80%. The average dose received by all of us from background radiation is around 2.4 mSv per year. In most countries the current maximum permissible dose to radiation workers is 20 mSv per year. The risk of fatal cancer for an adult from an examination is considered negligible (less than 1 in 1,000,000), according to the American College of Radiology. (Bear in mind that humans have a 1 in 3 chance of developing cancer at some time during their lifetime

anyway). It is recommended to use protective aprons with collars and the use the fastest film speeds available or a digital X-rays in order to minimize radiation exposure.

Cavities start small, if you catch them early, it will be an easy fix. Since cavities will not go away by themselves, they will continue to grow. As the decay goes further toward the nerve that lies in the center of your tooth, you may get sensitivity. If the decay reaches the nerve in your tooth, you will be very uncomfortable and will need a root canal. There are some things that can make you more prone to getting cavities and if you're seeing your doctor he/she can have you use a prescription toothpaste right away to help combat the decay. The ADA recommends healthy adults receive routine full mouth X-rays every two to three years. Dental x-rays are recommended every one to two years for children and every 1.5 to three years for teens. Children often require more X-rays than adults because of their developing teeth and jaws and increased likelihood for cavities.

Cancer Screening

The most important thing your doctor and hygienist are doing during the exam is an oral cancer screening, where they are checking your lips, mouth and top part of your throat for any abnormalities. Oral cancer frequently has no symptoms and



the patient does not know they have it. In 2011, it was estimated that 37,000 Americans would be diagnosed with a form of oral or pharyngeal cancer. 66% would be discovered in the late stages of the disease. Catching these late is part of the reason that slightly more than half of the people diagnosed will live past 5 years. This is a number that has not significantly improved in decades. The death rate for oral cancer is higher than that of cancers we hear about routinely such as Cervical cancer, Hodgkin's lymphoma, Laryngeal cancer, cancer of the testes, and endocrine system cancers such as thyroid, or skin cancer (malignant melanoma).

So, although you may feel as if you do a great job cleaning your teeth, there is a lot that goes on during a routine dental cleaning and exam. Your doctor is looking to keep you healthy. It is safer and cheaper to find a problem at your 6 month check-up then finding it 2 years after you were last seen.

Call Advanced Cosmetic and General Dentistry to schedule your routine visit today.



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