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London
City Dental

Why six-monthly dental check-ups are so important

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Visiting your dentist every six months is an event that you should look forward to, rather than delay. Why?

Because many more people today expect to keep their 'Teeth for Life'. Regular dental maintenance is the best way to achieve this, for the least expense and inconvenience.



● Your dental check up

The six-monthly dental inspection is not a quick five-minute scan with a dental probe, but much more. It should be a thorough and detailed search for tiny clues that can indicate bigger problems later, if they are not caught in time. You want your dentist to do the best professional job that he or she can. Here's why:

Gum Disease

Gum disease is the number one reason for losing teeth. Dentists call it the quiet destroyer, because it progresses slowly, causing inflammation and regression in the jawbone that retains and supports the teeth. Often it does its work without causing pain. By the time you notice that something's wrong – and probably feel discomfort, bleeding, tenderness and worst of all, loose teeth – it may be too late. There have been several cases of patients who sued their dentists for negligence, because these dentists performed check-ups but ignored progressive gum disease.

If your gums have had a history of disease and are also prone to inflammation, you need to have your teeth professionally scaled and cleaned very regularly – particularly if your dentist has found deep pockets down the side of any teeth. Hygiene (plaque and tartar) levels should be monitored, corrected and improved at those sessions. Although six months is a reasonable interval between cleaning, you may need to have this done more frequently (say, every four months). If that's so, accept it with good grace. It's your insurance against things going badly wrong later.

● Expect more for longer

These days people don't want to have false teeth in their sixties or seventies. Instead they want to keep their natural teeth for far longer than their parents or grandparents ever did. We live longer and enjoy a far higher standard of dentistry. All this has helped us redefine just how long our natural teeth should last.

The key to this fundamental change is a regular dental maintenance plan (or six-monthly check-up routine). Thanks to many dentists who constantly stress its importance, we now appreciate that we have to look after our teeth if they are to last a lifetime. But what exactly does this mean?

Tooth decay

The more dental restoration that's been done on a tooth, the more attention it will need over time. Heavily restored (filled) dentitions, particularly if some teeth have had root canal treatment, will need more frequent examination and x-rays than those that are untouched.

Even the best fillings have a limited life. Eventually, they deteriorate and need replacing. Crowns and bridges can last a lifetime because they are made of strong and durable materials. However, their joint with the tooth root underneath can be a weak point. If there is a leakage, the root underneath may decay. Catch this early or you risk losing the tooth.

The bite

The bite should be checked to make sure that the teeth are not only in harmony with each other, but also with the chewing muscles and the jaw joints. An unbalanced bite can cause discomfort, as well as damage the joints and even eventually cause arthritic changes.

Bad breath

Plaque is the commonest cause of this unpleasant condition. People are rarely aware that they suffer from this. Good home hygiene, combined with a professionally scaled and cleaned mouth, will eliminate bad breath.

Soft-tissue changes

Everyone should have their oral cavity checked for any signs of oral cancer or other soft tissue lesions in the mouth. Those particularly at risk, such as males over forty who smoke and drink significantly, should have a specific screening test carried out.

Aesthetics

Aesthetic, or cosmetic, dentistry is no longer just for the rich and famous. Modern techniques and materials have made it available to all and today it is becoming a normal part of regular, mainstream dentistry. Our teeth send an obvious and visible message about our economic and social health and wellbeing. It makes sense to discuss the colour, shape, position and general appearance of your teeth and smile during your regular dental review.

Six-monthly check-ups are your best option

It's unrealistic to expect dental restorations to last a lifetime, particularly if you have had them for decades. Don't wait until something goes wrong because it may be too late to save the tooth. Remember: dental restoration work will cost more than several years of routine check-ups.

Dental disease never cures itself. The longer you leave treatment, the more difficult it will be to do – taking more time, causing greater discomfort and costing more. So having a six monthly check-up is the best option – for your oral health as well as for your bank account.

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