



The Dental Checkup: *Your Prevention Connection*

You take pretty good care of your teeth—brushing, and flossing daily. You don't really have any major dental issues. Is it really necessary for you to schedule dental checkups unless there is a problem?

Oral health professionals point out that there are numerous reasons to keep those checkups on your calendar, even if you take good care of your teeth.

"Just because it has been a while since you've had a cavity or a dental health issue, don't give up on those visits to the dentist," said Michel Couret, DDS, Vice President, Professional Relations, Northeast Delta Dental. "Dental checkups continue to be an important part of taking care of teeth, preventing problems, and providing people with greater knowledge about their oral health."

Dental health professionals will suggest the frequency that is appropriate for you. Some people don't need to be seen twice each year, while others need to be seen more often.

Preventive checkups provide dentists with opportunities to identify and intervene early in the dental disease process. This can reduce pain and the financial costs associated with severe forms of dental disease. For example, periodontal disease that goes unnoticed for lack of a checkup can progress into more serious stages, possibly resulting in pain, tooth loss, and other problems. If caught early, periodontal disease is easier to manage; and, in some cases, is reversible, resulting in healthy teeth and gums.

Dental professionals can also use dental checkups to screen for oral cancers and other health issues that can be difficult to spot on your own. More than 120 diseases can cause specific signs and symptoms in and around the mouth and jaw. Dental professionals performing checkups can spot symptoms that could indicate serious health problems elsewhere in the body that need attention.

The prevention connection extends to recent changes in your health. Checkups allow your dentist to keep up with changes to your health status. Upon learning of medical conditions you've developed or treatments you're receiving, your dentist can recommend strategies to help you proactively counter the negative effects the conditions and treatments could otherwise have on your oral health.

Visiting the dentist for checkups is certainly easier if your employer offers dental benefits. Most dental plans cover preventive care and a limited number of checkups each year. If you aren't receiving dental coverage through your employer, ask your company's human resources department or benefits administrator if it is possible to purchase dental benefits. Most employers, when briefed on the many business-friendly reasons for offering dental benefits, will recognize their worth. Dental checkups are a great investment in your oral and overall health.

