



Hygienist Visit

Why do I need to see a Hygienist?

More teeth are lost through gum disease than through tooth decay. This has always been the case and still is today. Teeth naturally build up a layer of bacteria on them called plaque. This happens even when we have not been eating. Regular brushing will keep this layer to a minimum but it will almost always be present. Calcium, which is naturally present in saliva, gets into the plaque and turns it into calculus or tartar. This is a hard substance that cannot be removed by brushing. If tartar builds up on the teeth it prevents normal cleaning from getting to these areas and bacteria will build up. This will cause bad breath, tooth decay and inflammation of the gum, which will lead to loss of the bone that holds the teeth in place.

The hygienist will advise on how to prevent periodontal disease as well as carry out a range of treatments to help keep the teeth and gums healthy.

What is gum disease?

Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums and with good oral hygiene will normally heal once the tartar is removed.

Periodontitis is the loss of some of the bone holding in the teeth. Once lost we cannot replace this bone. Treatment is aimed at maintaining it at the new, lower level. The more bone loss, the more difficult it is to maintain as a pocket develops under the gum which is extremely difficult to keep clean.

How often should I see the Hygienist?

This varies for each individual depending on the speed with which you build up tartar and the amount of disease present. For simple tartar removal a six monthly visit is usually enough. If there is any bone loss or persistent inflammation then 3 monthly visits may be advised. People with more advanced gum disease may be advised to have root planing, which can involve several visits. The most advanced cases are usually referred to a specialist periodontist. (A dentist who exclusively looks after gum problems)

Do I have gum disease?

Almost everyone has some degree of gingivitis. Unfortunately gum disease is painless and rarely presents with any symptoms until the advanced stages.

The condition of your gums is assessed at every checkup appointment and an assessment will be made as to any treatment required, from a simple clean and oral hygiene advice to more advanced treatment. A score is taken for each area of your mouth on a scale of 0 to 4:

0 - the gums are completely healthy. There is no treatment required.

1 - there is some bleeding and inflammation in the gums. Some oral hygiene instruction may be required to prevent development of more serious disease.

2 - there is some buildup of calculus which will need to be removed.

3 - some of the attachment between the tooth and gum has been lost and remedial treatment will be required

4 - there is advanced periodontal disease that will need to be treated. There is a risk of tooth loss.

What does it cost?

Fees are based on time taken, each patient is assessed individually to see at what interval, and what length of appointment, they need.

What can I do to help?

Regular visits to the hygienist are only half the story. Meticulous oral hygiene including interdental cleaning is essential to keep inflammation, plaque and tartar build-up to a minimum. Your hygienist will advise you on the best oral hygiene regime for you.

What about Hygiene For Children?

The hygienist can also help your children in several ways:

They are able to provide Oral health education with advice on diet and brushing.

They can give clean and polishes to aid your child's oral hygiene

They can provide fissure sealants:

What are Fissure Sealants?

These are plastic coatings, which are placed over the permanent teeth as they erupt. They form a protective layer so that bacteria are prevented from reaching 'pits' of the teeth where it can be difficult to clean. Sealants are most commonly used on first permanent molars, which appear at about 6 years old.