

dental hygiene treatment

But the dentist usually polishes my teeth!

If you are used to having a scale and polish with your dentist you will know that this usually takes only a few minutes. The dental hygienist will spend 20-30 minutes or more on thoroughly cleaning and scaling your teeth. Additionally you will receive in-depth individual advice. This is because the treatment of gum disease, once it is established, takes more time. If the disease is quite advanced or if you have large amounts of plaque or tartar you may need multiple hygienist visits.

How often should I visit a hygienist?

There is no set time period for hygiene treatment as every patient has different needs. Recall frequencies are tailored to personal requirements. For example, in the case of advanced gum disease you may need a course of treatment consisting of four visits over the same number of weeks, followed by once a month for a year. Alternatively, if you have a healthy mouth, the recommended recall period could range from three to twelve monthly intervals.



What can a hygienist do for children?

As well as polishing children's teeth and applying fluoride gels, hygienists can put 'fissure sealants' in children's back teeth. This sealant is a tooth-coloured plastic coating, which forms a smooth, protective barrier over the fissures in the teeth, it is highly effective for preventing decay. Children will also benefit from an education session with the hygienist who will teach them about the effects of eating sugar or consuming fizzy drinks and teach a routine for proper mouth care at home.

For that special occasion

After treatment with a hygienist, your teeth will look cleaner and brighter and your mouth will feel much fresher. A treatment can be booked whenever you like: before a celebration; a holiday; or even a job interview. Ask the dentist about the availability of the hygienist, the recommended frequency of visits and, the cost of the treatment.



INFORMATION
FOR PATIENTS

Our aim is to help you keep
your teeth for life

dental hygiene treatment

for fresh breath

for healthy teeth and gums

Plaque

Plaque is a term that describes the film of bacteria which is constantly forming on the surface, and between, teeth. If left in place, it causes tooth decay and gum disease. When plaque has been present for several days it can combine with calcium from saliva, to form tartar (calculus) a hard deposit, which typically forms behind the lower teeth. Tartar can also be hidden deep below the gum.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is defined as inflammation of the tissues that support the teeth. The effect of this inflammation, over a period of time, is to cause the gums to recede. Recession occurs not only on the outside but also invisibly on the inside where the gum meets the tooth. In this way recession can cause pockets to develop between the teeth and gums. Bacteria accumulates inside pockets and accelerates the disease process. Diseased or inflamed gums bleed when they are brushed or flossed, but healthy gums do not bleed.

Gum problems usually begin without any initial symptoms that's why it's important to have both your teeth and gums regularly checked. Once problems start they can progress at an increased rate, with damage occurring over a relatively short period of time.

When gum disease is in the early stages it is called gingivitis. The more advanced form, when inflammation reaches the bone, is called periodontitis, which, if untreated can eventually result in tooth loss.

Who suffers from gum disease?

Almost everybody has some gum inflammation but we all react differently to the presence of plaque and tartar on the teeth. This means that some of us suffer quite badly from gum

recession even though there is little plaque or tartar present. Generally, the cleaner your teeth are and the less plaque and tartar you have, the less gum disease you will have. Factors such as smoking, use of prescription medication or poor health can cause an increased risk of gum problems. Your dentist or hygienist will be able to advise you about this.

Incorrect tooth brushing can also damage the teeth and cause recession of the gums. The hygienist is trained to spot the tell-tale signs of incorrect brushing and to help you correct the daily routine.

How do I prevent gum disease?

Healthy gums are the support for healthy teeth. Lifelong protection for both teeth and gums starts with regular dental examinations and hygiene visits. 80% of adults have gum disease to some degree and everybody needs advice on oral healthcare.

Thorough tooth cleaning each day will prevent plaque from building up in sufficient amounts to cause damage to teeth and gums. Brushing can remove plaque on the front and back surfaces of the teeth and aids such as floss, tape or interdental brushes can remove plaque from between the teeth. The hygienist will demonstrate brushing techniques, the use of floss and other devices and will help choose the right products. Once tartar has formed, it can only be removed by a hygienist or dentist.

A good oral hygiene routine at home is the most important factor in preventing gum disease, but your needs will differ as time passes and the mouth changes, so you'll need new oral care techniques during different phases of life. The hygienist will monitor your oral health and provide the most appropriate advice.

The hygienist visit

The hygienist will assess your gums and teeth, checking for any swelling or inflammation and for any bleeding. Measurements of where the gum attaches to the tooth (pockets) may also be taken. The hygienist will then carefully remove the tartar using manual or ultrasonic instruments. Removing the tartar makes the teeth easier to keep clean, as its rough surface tends to attract more plaque. The hygienist will then polish the teeth leaving them smooth and clean. If there is a lot of tartar, two or more visits may be necessary.

If gum disease has become advanced, a special programme for removing deep tartar from the root surface may be required. This is called root planing or debridement and it may be necessary for the dentist or hygienist to anaesthetise the gum to make it comfortable. In some cases a slow-release gel may be prescribed to help stop the harmful bacteria from causing further damage.

Recent research has shown that people who regularly see the hygienist experience less dental decay and require less dental work in the long term.

