

Dental exams and cleanings



Although many people combine them into one appointment, a dental cleaning and a dental exam are two different procedures.

During a cleaning, your dentist or dental hygienist scrapes plaque and tartar from your teeth.

In an exam, the dentist will carefully look at your teeth, mouth and throat to identify any problems, such as cavities, gum disease, loose fillings and oral cancer. Getting consistent exams means your dentist can detect problems when they are easier to treat.

How often do you need them?

The American Dental Association recommends getting a cleaning and exam every six months, which is why most dental plans cover two exams and two cleanings a year.

If you're at high risk, however, you may need more frequent exams and cleanings. Risk factors include the following:

- Diabetes
- Weak immune system
- Pregnancy
- Smoking
- Cavity-prone
- Gum disease



Did you know?

Children should get their first dental exam by age 1.¹

Dental cleaning

1. Your dentist or hygienist will remove plaque and tartar using either a metal scaler, which physically scrapes off bacterial build-up, or an ultrasonic scaler, which uses vibration.
2. Water will be squirted into your mouth to rinse off the plaque. Then, a suction tool will suck it right up.
3. Your teeth will be polished with a gritty toothpaste.
4. Your teeth will be flossed.
5. You may receive a fluoride treatment to help strengthen enamel and prevent cavities.
6. Your dentist or hygienist will discuss any problems with your teeth or gums and may advise you on a better brushing or flossing technique.

Dental exam

1. You may receive X-rays to look more closely at your teeth and jaw.
2. Your dentist will review your medical and dental history and ask about any symptoms you experienced recently.
3. Your dentist will look in your mouth and evaluate the health of your mouth, teeth, gums and jaw. They'll examine the alignment of your teeth and check for signs of grinding. They may use a mirror or small tools to help.
4. You can ask questions about the health of your mouth.



Want to know more?

Check out related procedures such as sealants, crowns and root canals at deltadentalins.com/wellness.

¹ American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

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