



How often should you see a dentist?

Regular routine check-ups are important - not just for the teeth but also the gums and the mouth as a whole. If there are any changes that need to be treated, such as tooth decay or gum disease, these can often be detected in the early stages, making treatment more straight-forward. Regular visits can also help identify risks so that preventive strategies can be put in place.

Most dentists recommend a routine dental check-up every 6 to 12 months, but a cookie cutter approach does not necessarily work for everyone. You may need to visit your dentist more or less frequently so your dentist will advise you how often you should have a check-up.

Important things that will be checked include:

- Oral hygiene and Diet
- Health of teeth, lips, cheeks and gums and risk of tooth decay and gum disease
- Signs of tooth wear
- Growth and alignment of the teeth and jaws and problems with the bite

Childhood

It is recommended that your child has their first dental check by their first birthday¹. If it is not possible to get to a dentist, the first dental check may be done by a child health professional with training in oral health². Low risk children should visit their dentist at least once a year, while children may need to visit the dentist every 3 to 6 months until their risk of decay has been stabilised.³ Timing can be important for

correction of orthodontic (bite) problems, so regular dental check-ups are important during the transition from baby teeth to adult teeth.

Other important things that may be checked include:

- Infant feeding patterns
- Habits such as dummy sucking or thumb sucking

Adolescence

Adolescence may be a time with greater diet and social risk factors, such as soft drink or alcohol consumption, smoking and vaping.⁴. Teenagers may also have poor tooth brushing habits³. Regular dental checks are necessary during early teenage years to see if braces or other bite correction may be required. Adolescents with braces also need regular check-ups with their general dentist to ensure they stay decay-free.

Other important things that may be checked include:

- Habits such as grinding/clenching the teeth or smoking
- Oral piercings

Adults

Each individual's risk of tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer needs to be regularly monitored throughout life. Existing dental work also needs to be checked as maintenance and replacement of fillings or other dental work will be necessary over time.

Your dentist will also consider the effects of other risk factors such as smoking, diabetes and medications that can influence oral health.

Adults with a very low risk of oral disease may only need to visit a dentist every 1 to 2 years³ but those at high risk of gum disease or tooth decay may need to visit the dentist every 3 months^{3,4}. Your dentist will advise you how often you should visit.

Other important things that may be checked include:

- Screening for oral cancer
- Need for repair or replacement of fillings or other dental work
- Habits such as grinding/clenching the teeth or smoking

References

1. Australian Dental Association Policy Statement 2.3.1- Delivery of Oral Health: Special Groups: Children, 2021
2. Early Childhood Oral Health Guidelines for Child Health Professionals, 3rd Edition, Centre for Oral Health Strategy NSW, 2014
3. The International Caries Classification and Management System (ICCMS™) An Example of a Caries Management Pathway. Ismail et al, BMC Oral Health. 2015;15 Suppl 1(Suppl 1):S9.
4. Examining the effectiveness of different dental recall strategies on maintenance of optimum oral health: the INTERVAL dental recalls randomised controlled trial. Clarkson et al, Br Dent J. 2021 Feb;230(4):236-243.
4. Treatment of stage I-III periodontitis-The EFP S3 level clinical practice guideline. Sanz et al, J Clin Periodontol. 2020 Jul;47 Suppl 22(Suppl 22):4-60.