

Frequently Asked Questions About Preventive Dental Care

What is preventive dental care?

Preventive dental care is all the things you do (or should do) to take care of your teeth and gums: brushing, flossing, eating a healthy diet, and seeing your dentist regularly to help avoid dental disease.

Why is preventive dental care important?

When it comes to the health of your teeth and gums, preventive dental care is smart. Brushing and flossing help to remove plaque from the surfaces and in between teeth, keeping your teeth looking and feeling clean. A healthy diet, one low in sugar and other refined carbohydrates, helps keep your whole body, including your teeth and gums, in good shape. And routine dental exams and regular cleanings may help prevent the incidence of higher-cost treatments such as periodontal surgery, root canals, extractions and fillings. After all, early detection and prevention are key to minimizing your need for more serious dental treatment.

How often should I see my dentist?

There are no clear guidelines stating how often a person should see the dentist. Some studies suggest once a year, others say every three or six months. Depending on your current dental health, your dental history, your risk factors for dental disease, and your personal preference, your dentist will recommend the frequency of visits that's right for you.

What does the American Dental Association say about routine dental care?

The ADA recommends the following steps for good dental health:¹

- Brush your teeth twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste.
- Replace your toothbrush every three or four months, sooner if it shows signs of wear.
- Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner.
- Eat a balanced diet, and limit soft drinks and between-meal snacks.
- Be sure to receive professional cleanings and oral exams on a regular basis.

What questions should I ask my dentist about routine dental care?

Which toothbrush, toothpaste, floss and/or other products do you recommend for my teeth?

Based on my dental history and current oral health condition, how many cleanings do you recommend I have each year, and why?

Am I at risk for any dental diseases? If so, why? What changes should I make in my routine dental care to help control this risk?

1. American Dental Association. "Brushing Your Teeth", <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/brushing-your-teeth> Accessed 06/28/2017.

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