



The least important thing we did for you today was clean your teeth

Many patients don't realize that the most important part of their "check up and cleaning" visit is the check-up, not the cleaning. Dentistry has actually known for some time now that if you have gum disease the typical cleaning that is performed twice yearly will have no effect. It is true. Gum disease occurs when bacteria gets under the gum line beyond where your toothbrush (and beyond where even the hygienist) can reach. If you have gum disease, getting

your teeth cleaned faithfully will neither eliminate the gum disease nor prevent its recurrence. Medical research is confirming that inflammation in the body is a significant factor in many of the chronic diseases of aging (heart disease, diabetes, cancer, Alzheimer's disease). It turns out that the mouth is a significant source of inflammation when gum disease is present. Left untreated, gum disease increases your risk for these serious systemic diseases. Gum disease is a silent disease – you can have it and not even know it. Often only a dentist or hygienist can tell if you have gum disease. There are identifiable risk factors that make some people more susceptible to gum disease than others. Thus, in this new age of dental medicine your regular dental visits should no longer be solely about cleaning teeth – they should be about inflammation.

The most important things that a dental hygienist should do for you during your regular visits are:

1. Determine if there any areas of gum inflammation in your mouth. Many of our new patients have never had their dentist or hygienist make a measurement of their periodontal pockets! If you do have gum inflammation, treatment should be rendered to eliminate it. Simply polishing the teeth will make the teeth feel good for a day or two, but will have no effect on reducing the inflammation.
2. Determine if you have any risk factors for gum disease.
3. Determine the method which will result in the most rapid elimination of your gum inflammation.
4. Determine a daily program which will allow you to keep gum disease at bay.

Once you have been treated for gum disease you will enter into the maintenance phase. Maintenance care is intended to keep things inflammation free. We need to see you on a frequent enough basis to insure that gum inflammation does not return. We know that it takes about 8-12 weeks for bacteria to migrate back under the gum line. In advanced cases we see patients for maintenance care every 2-3 months. Other patients with a less imposing risk profile do not need to be seen as frequently. We make a determination of how frequently you need to be seen based on your risk factors, previous treatment history and current findings.

The most important reason that you should have regular visits is to allow a dental professional to determine if you have any areas of gum inflammation or any other dental disease.

If you have questions about your periodontal health, please call
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