

Is It Time for a Checkup? Here's What You Should Know.

Just as an automobile needs regular oil changes and routine maintenance, your teeth need regular care. This includes not only good brushing and flossing but also a checkup consisting of a professional examination and dental cleaning every 6 months. A checkup can catch problems early when they're still relatively easy and inexpensive to treat. Prevention and early detection can save a lot of time, money, and unpleasantness.

Sometimes, though, you shouldn't wait that long. When you see signs that the brakes on your car are getting ready to go, do you wait until they fail before replacing them? We hope not! Well, there are also signs that you should see a dentist as soon as possible.

Signs That It's Time for a Dental Checkup

If you are experiencing one or more of the following, it's an indicator that you should schedule a checkup with your dentist.

- **Toothache**-- Any toothache that persists longer than a day is cause for concern. A toothache can signify a cavity, but it can also be a symptom of tooth decay, a fracture, or a damaged filling.
- **Gum ache**-- Aching gums can suggest an infection in the gums.
- **Bleeding gums**-- If your gums are bleeding during brushing, it could just be that you are brushing too hard, but bleeding gums are major signs of periodontal (gum) diseases such as gingivitis, which is an inflammation of the gums. Left untreated, it can worsen to more serious conditions such as tooth loss. Gum disease is very common, and expert studies estimate that as many as half of all adults will experience a form of it at some point. Your dentist can determine what is causing the bleeding and what to do about it.
- **Loose tooth**-- A loose tooth often is the result of an injury, but it can also indicate a bone disease such as osteoporosis that reduces bone density and can cause teeth to loosen. Have a dentist examine loose teeth to determine the cause and what steps to take.
- **Heat and cold sensitivity**-- If your teeth are causing you pain when you consume cold or hot foods and beverages, there is probably a problem with oral health. There could be a cavity or fracture, tooth decay, weakened enamel, a damaged filling, or gum disease.
- **Discoloration**-- If your teeth are discolored from foods and beverages (coffee, tea and tobacco can be big causes of this), don't wait until your next scheduled visit if it is still several months away, and if you don't have a visit scheduled, schedule one. Discolored teeth can cause a lack of self-confidence in people, and they might contribute to negative reactions in social or professional situations. A checkup will include a cleaning that can restore some or all of the natural color, and the dentist can also discuss options for whitening treatments.

- **Bad breath--** Bad breath from that spicy lunch you had can usually be dealt with easily by brushing and mouthwash, but chronic bad breath is more serious because it can be embarrassing, damaging to relationships, and sometimes indicative of a dental problem. If you are experiencing ongoing bad breath (halitosis), it could be from dietary habits or from smoking, but it also can result from dental problems like buildup of plaque and bacteria. A dentist can help figure out what is causing chronic bad breath and how to get rid of it.
- **Oral sores--** Any oral sore that lasts more than a week is something a dentist should examine during a checkup to determine if there is an underlying oral problem at work and how to treat it.
- **Loose or broken implants--** Implants are designed to be permanent, but they can still become loose or broken from accidents or other situations causing damage. If you have a crown or implant that appears to be loose, broken, or otherwise compromised, see a dentist right away to have it fixed and to prevent more damage from occurring.
- **It's been more than 6 months since your last visit.**

What To Expect During Your Visit

Your scheduled checkup consists of 2 parts involving 2 separate professionals. One part is the examination, and the other is the cleaning. A hygienist will perform an initial exam and document anything needing the dentist's attention. The hygienist will also perform the cleaning and discuss oral hygiene. To look for cavities, signs of gum disease, or other problems, the dentist will make a thorough examination of your teeth and gums.

Let's look at these things in a little more detail.

- **X-Rays--** During your first visit, you should expect the treatment to include x-rays. The dentist can use these to look for cavities and other dental problems like bone loss and tooth decay. X-rays also help with identifying the positions of teeth and roots. How often you will need x-rays in the future is something the dentist will determine.
- **Cleaning (Scaling)--** The hygienist uses specialized tools to remove plaque and tartar from the teeth, essentially scraping them off. Plaque can cause inflammation of gums, which is the beginning of gum disease, and tartar is hardened plaque adhered to teeth. Flossing is included during the teeth cleaning.
- **Polishing--** Following the cleaning, the hygienist will use an abrasive (but not damaging) paste to remove stains and any leftover plaque. Sometimes a fluoride treatment is a part of the polishing process.
- **Examination--** The dentist will inspect your teeth and gums for problems noted previously, as well as how the jaws and teeth line up, but there also will be an examination of the throat, tongue, head, and neck. One of the big things the dentist will be looking for here is signs of oral cancer.
- **Recommendations--** Both the hygienist and dentist will make recommendations about brushing, flossing, and other aspects of oral care based on what they see during your

visit. This can include discussions about lifestyle issues such as dietary choices and tobacco use.

- **Follow-up--** If there are cavities or other issues requiring follow-up treatment, the dentist will explain them to you and go over options. When the intervention of a specialist such as an oral surgeon is necessary, the dentist will provide a referral. In most cases, you can schedule the follow-up treatment before you leave.

Make an Appointment with Us!

Somewhere along the way, going to see a dentist became one of the last things some people wanted to do, conjuring up scary images of painful procedures and crude instruments, but it's not that way at all! In fact, modern dentistry goes to great lengths to provide a comfortable experience for patients and to make each patient a part of the process by explaining everything clearly.

Now that you know the importance of regular dental checkups, let's schedule one.

At Dr. Carrie Muzny and Associates, we have top-quality Woodlands-area dentists ready to help you and your family have sunny, healthy smiles. With our state-of-the-art technology, top-of-the-line procedures, and exceptional training, we offer a full range of family and cosmetic dental services, including sedation dentistry and some surgical procedures.

We would absolutely love to schedule an appointment for you, and we even offer virtual consultations. To request an appointment or a virtual consultation, you can use our [convenient online form](#) or call us at (281) 298-2205. We look forward to seeing you soon!

IMPORTANT: This written material has been prepared based on sources which you provided. Neither Flocksy or the creative who wrote the copy makes any claims whatsoever as to the accuracy of the information contained within, and they are not responsible for any legal or financial difficulty resulting from the use of this written material. We encourage you to review it thoroughly before disseminating it or using it in trade.

SOURCES USED:

CM DDS Blog examples (tone examples):

<https://www.carriemuznydds.com/2019/09/5-reasons-why-your-gums-might-be-bleeding/>

<https://www.carriemuznydds.com/2019/04/protecting-yourself-against-oral-cancer/>

<https://www.carriemuznydds.com/2019/02/are-dental-x-rays-safe/>

Competitor articles:

<https://dragonflydentalportcharlotte.com/blog/5-signs-time-dental-check/>

<https://austinprimarydental.com/blog/7-signs-time-dental-checkup/>

<https://www.dentalcare.com/en-us/patient-education/patient-materials/why-are-regular-dental-visits-important>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/dental-exam-for-children/about/pac-20393728>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/11187-dental-check-up/procedure-details>