

WHY VISIT THE DENTIST?



Regular examinations and cleanings can help you save money now and can prevent costly services in the future.

That's right. Experts say that every dollar spent on preventive dental care today can result in lower future dental treatment costs! Below, review some of the many reasons why professional dental care is important to oral and overall health.

- **Detect cavities early:** Your dentist can examine your teeth for cavities (caries) to find them while they're still minor and relatively inexpensive to treat.
- **Detect gum disease early:** Many people with gum disease do not even realize they have it.
- **Detect oral cancer early:** Your dentist can examine your mouth for any irregularities that may indicate oral cancer before it becomes advanced. This is especially important for individuals that smoke or chew tobacco.
- **Check that fillings remain secure:** Your dentist can examine any fillings for surrounding decay or to determine whether any have become defective.
- **Avoid/treat bad breath or dry mouth:** Your dentist can identify and treat oral conditions that may increase your risk for these problems.
- **Review oral hygiene routines:** Your dentist and hygienist can help you establish and maintain good oral health habits at home.

Dental problems typically fall into one of two categories: tooth decay or gum disease. Your dentist can help you fight both.

Tooth decay is a destruction of the tooth enamel. It occurs when foods containing carbohydrates (sugars and starches) are frequently left on the teeth. Bacteria that live in the mouth thrive on these foods, producing acids as a result. Over a period of time, these acids destroy tooth enamel, resulting in tooth decay. Tooth decay can happen at any age.

Periodontal (gum) disease is a chronic bacterial infection that affects the gums and bone supporting the teeth. It's the most significant dental disease affecting adults. Gingivitis is the milder and reversible form of gum disease that only affects the gums. But gingivitis may lead to more serious, destructive forms of gum disease called periodontitis.

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- **Protect your overall health:** Research suggests associations between gum disease and complications for diabetes, heart disease, stroke and other medical conditions.
- **Protect the oral health of your family:** Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic infectious diseases among U.S. children.
 - 42% of two to 11-year-old children have at least one cavity or filling¹
 - 23% of two to 11-year-old children have untreated dental cavities¹
 - 21% of six to 11-year-old children have cavities in their permanent teeth¹

1. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. (2011, March 25). *Dental caries (tooth decay) in children (age 2 to 11)*. Retrieved from <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/FindDataByTopic/DentalCaries/DentalCariesChildren2to11.htm>

Fortunately, you have a Cigna Dental plan that makes it easier to care for your teeth and gums – and your budget!



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