

Preventive Dental Visits...are they so important as my dentist tells me they are?

Early detection opens the door to early intervention, which means averting decay, complications and further expenses. Cavities may appear to be “stains”, but upon drying the tooth by a trained eye, the first detection of decay can be made visually. Typically found in pits and fissures of back teeth, cavities begin as a change in the color and opacity of the enamel within deep grooves. If detected early enough, these areas can typically be treated painlessly without anesthesia, with less expense, less complications and more of a predictable outcome. In other words, waiting for a tooth to hurt before diagnosing and treating it can lead to treatment that is more expensive, less predictable and more complicated.

So, how is this done. Two things are important to address early detection of decaying teeth. First, maintain frequency of hygiene visits with your dental office. The dentist is able to diagnose and give you options for preventive or early treatment. Your Hygienist is able to educate you on how to keep those fillings, crowns and hard to reach areas clean at home. Then, maintain the health of your teeth and gums by effective brushing and flossing in an effective manner.

When visiting your Hygienist, know that is not simply a “cleaning”. Professional Dental Hygiene visits are important for several reasons. One, to physically remove tartar buildup from areas that could not be flossed or brushed at home. Examples of these areas include teeth with crowns, fillings (both silver and tooth-colored) or any restorations where the area between the restoration and the tooth must be kept clean to assure longevity of the restoration. Next, to chemically control the bacteria using adjunctive products like Fluoride, Chlorhexidine, Xylitol or a combination of these and other products. And, we can't forget education. Your Hygienist makes sure that you are utilizing accurate and effective methods to brush, floss and rinse at home to assure optimal health in between your Professional Hygiene Visits. Remember... you can clean your teeth at home, but the reason you see your Hygienist at the recommended frequency your dentist suggests is to address those areas you can't reach at home.

Finally, much like everything else in life, remember that it is less expensive and less complicated to preventively treat based on a preventive diagnosis than it is to wait for things to break, then treat.... think PREVENTION!