

Dental recall

Understanding NICE guidance – information for people the public

Poster

May 2004

How often should I see the dentist?

You are probably used to being told by your dentist that you need a check up every six months. But new guidelines advise dentists to match check-up appointments more closely to each individual's needs.

Different people may be given different gaps between check-ups. Your dentist will judge your particular risk of future problems at each check-up. He or she may suggest you return in six months, but may suggest a different gap.

For adults, the suggested gap between check-ups may be three, six, nine, 12, 15, 18, 21 or 24 months. Under 18's could have a three, six, nine or 12 month gap between check-ups. This gap may get longer or shorter at different times in your life, depending on your teeth or other changes in your health or lifestyle.

This poster and the accompanying leaflet explain new guidelines produced by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) (see 'for more information'). They deal with routine check-up appointments only, not appointments with your dentist or hygienist for treatment such as fillings, having a tooth out or having your teeth cleaned (called a 'scale and polish').

If you have any problems in between check-ups such as bleeding gums or pain, contact your dentist's surgery to make an earlier appointment. In an emergency outside office hours, contact NHS Direct (0845 46 47) for the Emergency Dental Service.

What your dentist will do at a check up

- Ask about your health and any problems with your teeth or gums
- Examine your teeth, gums and mouth
- Ask you about your diet and lifestyle
- Ask about your teeth cleaning habits and advise you on looking after your teeth

Based on what they find at each check-up, and bearing in mind any previous dental problems, your dentist will judge your risk of future problems. They will then suggest a date for your next check-up. If you agree, an appointment will be made.

What you can do at home

There is a lot you can do to keep your mouth and teeth healthy, and reduce the need for such frequent check-ups:

- Diet: reduce the consumption and especially the frequency of intake of drinks, confectionery and foods with sugars.
- Toothbrushing: clean the teeth thoroughly twice every day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Dental attendance: have dental check-ups when recommended by your dentist

Finding a dentist

For details on finding an NHS dentist contact NHS Direct (0845 46 47)

For private dentists in your area, try the yellow pages. Or ask friends, family or neighbours to recommend somebody. Do we need to make a statement about finding a private dentist?

You should always be told in advance how much check-up appointments or any other dental treatment will cost – cancel or change it in advance or you may be charged a fee.

For more information

This change in dentists' advice on check-up appointments is the result of new guidelines for dentists produced by NICE ...called... etc. Contact NICE for the full guideline..... ***[details to be completed before publication]***

Ask your dentist and ask for patient information leaflet..... which supplements this poster. ***[details to be completed before publication]***