

Dental recall: Recall interval between routine dental examinations

Information for the public

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About this information

NICE clinical guidelines advise the NHS on caring for people with specific conditions or diseases and the treatments they should receive. The information applies to people using the NHS in England and Wales.

This information explains the advice about dental check-ups that is set out in NICE clinical guideline 19.

If you have been used to regular check-ups every 6 months, you may find this changes. The gap could be longer or shorter than this, depending on how healthy your teeth and gums are and your risk of future problems.

Why is a check-up important?

It lets the dentist see if you have any dental problems and helps you keep your mouth healthy. It is best to prevent problems or treat them early on – leaving them could mean that treatment is more difficult in the future.

What happens at each check-up?

At each check-up your dentist should:

- examine your teeth, gums and mouth
- ask about your general health and any problems you've had with your teeth, mouth or gums since your last visit
- ask about and give you advice on your diet, tobacco and alcohol use, and teeth cleaning habits
- discuss with you a date for your next visit.

How often should I come back for a check-up?

After your check-up, your dentist will recommend a date for your next visit and discuss this with you.

The time to your next check-up could be as short as 3 months or as long as 2 years – or up to 1 year if you are under 18.

Generally speaking, the lower your risk of dental problems, the longer the gap will be before your next check-up. This may vary at different times of your life depending on the condition of your teeth, gums and mouth or other changes in your health or lifestyle.

What about other treatments?

This advice is about routine checkups only. You may have other appointments for treatments such as teeth cleaning (scale and polish), fillings or having a tooth out, or for emergency treatment.

If you have problems with your teeth between check-ups, contact your dentist's surgery to make an earlier appointment. In an emergency outside normal working hours, contact your dentist's surgery on their usual number and you will be informed how to access emergency dental care. If you are not registered with an NHS dentist, you can call NHS Direct (0845 46 47) for advice on what to do.

Where can I find out more?

NHS guidelines for dentists

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has published guidance to help dentists decide how often each patient needs a check-up. More information on this [guidance](#) on dental check-ups is available on the NICE website.

The guidance was prepared by dentists, patient representatives and scientists. They looked at the evidence available on choosing the right gap between check-ups, and made recommendations based on this evidence. There is more about NICE and the way that the NICE guidelines are developed on the [NICE website](#).

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