

How often should I get my teeth cleaned?

August 27 2019, by Arosha Weerakoon



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

If you went to your dentist for a check-up and dental clean in the last year, give yourself a pat on the back. Not everyone loves the dentist, but [research](#) shows people who visit at least once a year for preventative care are happier with their smile.

Regular dental visitors are also [less likely](#) to need a filling or have a tooth removed.

So how often do we need to go to the [dentist](#)? Most of us can get away with an annual trip, but some people at higher risk of dental problems should [visit more often](#).

Why do I need to get my teeth cleaned?

While we all do the best we can on our own, professional [teeth](#) cleaning removes plaque, the soft yellowish build-up, and calculus (hardened plaque) we can't get to. This soft build-up is made up of billions of different types of bacteria that live and reproduce in our mouth by feeding on the food we eat.

Most bacteria live in our bodies without causing too much trouble. But certain bacteria in dental plaque, when they grow in numbers, can lead to cavities (holes in the teeth) or [gum disease](#).

A dental clean will reduce your chance of getting cavities or gum disease by [significantly reducing](#) the amount of plaque and calculus in your mouth.

So how often?

As a dentist, my patients often ask me how regularly they should get their teeth cleaned. My response is usually: "That depends."

Most private [health](#) insurance schemes cover a dental check-up and clean once every six months. But there's no hard and fast evidence, particularly if you're a healthy person who is less likely to get a [cavity](#) or gum disease.

However, some people are at higher risk of getting dental cavities or gum disease—and this group should get their teeth cleaned more often.

Hole in one

We know certain [health and lifestyle factors](#) can affect a person's risk of developing cavities. Here are some yes/no questions you can ask yourself to understand whether you're at a higher risk:

1. is your [drinking water](#) or toothpaste fluoride-free?
2. do you snack a lot, including on sweets?
3. do you avoid flossing?
4. do you brush your teeth less than twice a day?
5. do you visit your dentist for toothaches rather than check-ups?
6. do you need new fillings every time you visit the dentist?
7. is your dentist "watching" a lot of early cavities?
8. do you have to wear an appliance in your mouth such as a denture or braces?
9. do you suffer from a chronic long-term health condition such as diabetes?
10. do you suffer from a dry mouth?

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, you're likely to need to see your dentist or hygienist at least every six months, if not more often.

As well as removing the bug-loaded plaque and calculus, people prone to cavities [benefit](#) from the fluoride treatment after scaling.

Evidence shows professional fluoride treatment every six months can lead to a [30% reduced risk](#) of developing cavities, needing fillings or having teeth removed.

Dental health is related to our overall health

Some people with [chronic health issues](#) such as heart conditions or

diabetes will need to see their dentists more frequently. This is because they are [more prone to gum disease](#).

People taking [blood thinners](#) and other medications, such as pills and infusions for [osteoporosis](#), may need to visit the dentist more regularly too. These medications can complicate the process of an extraction or other dental work, so regular checks and cleans are best to help detect problems before they become serious.

People with bleeding gums should also see their dental practitioners more often. This is [especially important](#) if you have been diagnosed with advanced gum disease, known as periodontal disease.

What about the budget?

The [average cost](#) of a check-up, dental clean and fluoride treatment is A\$231, but the cost can vary from A\$150 to A\$305. You can contact your local dentist to find out what they charge. Your dentist may offer you a payment plan.

If you can't afford this, you may qualify for [free or discounted treatment](#) if you hold a concession card. Children from families that receive a Family Tax Benefit A may be eligible for free dental treatment through the [Child Dental Benefits Schedule](#).

People with private health insurance with extras or ancillary cover will also have some or all of their dental treatment covered.

Protecting your smile

So you don't really get cavities or have gum [disease](#), but would prefer to see your dentist every six months? Great. [Some people](#) prefer to go twice

a year to reduce the chance of a nasty toothache.

Parents often wish to set a good example for their children by making regular check and clean appointments for the whole family.

There are many benefits to regular checks and cleans. Visiting your dentist regularly helps reduce the chance of needing more complex and expensive dental treatment later on.

And touching base with your oral health practitioner provides that nudge we all need now and again to eat healthily, brush better and floss more often.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: How often should I get my teeth cleaned? (2019, August 27) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-teeth.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.