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Visiting the Hygienist

## What is a hygienist?

Dental hygienists are specially trained to work with the dentists in giving care to patients.

They play an important role in dental health care and are mainly concern with the gum health, showing people correct home care and applying preventative materials to teeth and gums.

Keeping your smile looking good requires ongoing preventative care. Regular visits to your own dentist and hygienist are essential part of your oral health maintenance program.

## What does hygienist do in the practice?

The hygienist's main work is to prevent and treat gum disease including professionally cleaning your teeth. This is usually called 'scaling and polishing'. However, perhaps their most important role is showing you the best way to keep your teeth free of plaque.

They also give advice on diet and preventing dental decay. The hygienist will work alongside your dentist to give you care that is tailored to your needs.

## What is plaque?

Plaque is a sticky coating consisting of bacteria that forms constantly on your teeth. If it is not brushed away properly, this hardens to form tartar/calculus which you cannot remove yourself.

Persistent plaque and calculus can lead to periodontal disease causing bleeding gums, tooth mobility and eventual tooth loss.

## What treatment is available for children?

Children can benefit from having their teeth cleaned and polished. The hygienist can also apply fluoride varnishes to help prevent decay.

The permanent (or 'adult') back teeth can also benefit from having the biting surfaces sealed (Fissure sealants). This is done by applying a special plastic coating to the biting surface soon after the teeth come through reducing the risk of tooth decay in deep fissures that cannot be easily cleaned.

## What other help can be given to adults?

Adults who have a lot of decay can benefit from having fluoride applied. They can also have anti-bacterial gels and solutions applied under the gum to kill the bacteria causing gum disease.

The hygienist may also give smoking cessation advice. Smoking is a big factor in causing periodontal disease, bone loss, oral cancer, reduced healing after extractions/surgery and staining of teeth.

## Hygiene coupled with orthodontic treatment.

Having fixed appliances whether they are placed on the outside or inside your teeth makes you oral hygiene that little bit more difficult.

We recommend routine appointments EVERY 3-4months with our dental hygienists in order to maintain healthy teeth and gums especially during your orthodontic treatment.

This will help prevent bleeding and swollen gums as well as tooth decay under the brace affecting the outcome of your final orthodontic result.

The ministry of dental health also advises for regular fluoride applications during these visits and during your orthodontic treatment.

## Advantages of having your hygiene sessions at eleven

If you don't have a hygienist during your orthodontic treatment then it would be advantageous for you to see our in house hygienists EVERY 3-4months.

At these appointments your wires will be removed and along with having your teeth and gums cleaned your brace will be too! We can easily couple this with your adjustment appointment so that it reduces the amount of time taken off work/school.

## Do I still need to see my regular dentist?

Yes. It is important you still have checkups 6 months with your regular dentist.

Your dentist or periodontist may have referred you to your hygienist. So it is important that you see them at regular 4-6 month intervals to monitor your progress.

If you are a 'direct access' patient the hygienist may refer you to a dentist for a check up and treatment plan or a periodontist.