



Exam



What it is:

Your dentist will closely examine your teeth, mouth and throat to evaluate your oral health.

Why you need one:

Regular dental exams (at least annually) help your dentist discover dental problems, such as tooth decay and gum disease, early when they are easy to treat or even reversible. A routine exam may also help with early detection of serious conditions such as oral cancer and diabetes.

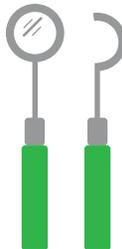
How it works:

Step 1

If it's your first time visiting your dentist, he or she will first ask a few questions about your overall oral health, any other health conditions, and whether you take any medications.

Step 2

Using small instruments and a mirror, your dentist will look inside your mouth for tooth decay and signs of gum disease, including redness, swelling and areas where the gum tissue has separated from the tooth's root (gingival pockets). The exam is almost entirely painless, with perhaps some very mild tenderness while checking for signs of gum disease.



Step 3

Your dentist will look at how your teeth are aligned and for signs of tooth-damaging habits, such as grinding. He or she may also examine your neck, lymph glands, tongue, palate and soft mouth tissues for signs of infection, abnormal growths or oral cancer.

Worth noting:

An exam is commonly paired with a cleaning. In many cases, you receive a cleaning from the hygienist before the exam.