

# Dentists care through recare

It is generally acknowledged that it is important for overall health that a “dental check-up and cleaning” is important at least twice a year. (Actually, the 6-month interval has no scientific basis. It was established by a toothpaste commercial in the 1950’s. Some people need recare more or less frequently than others.) However, it is not commonly understood that rarely is a dental recare visit “just a cleaning.” In fact, the dental recare appointment is the most important service that a dental team provides. Most of the valuable services provided at a thorough recare visit are included at no additional charge, a value that almost never is recognized.

During a thorough semi-annual recare visit for a healthy patient, the following services are usually included: a review of your medical history, blood pressure screening, an oral cancer screening examination, an assessment of the health of the bones and skin supporting your teeth, a review of your dental history, nutritional counseling, an evaluation of the health of your teeth themselves and the restorations that you have, a screening evaluation of your jaw joints, thorough record-keeping and photographic documentation, and assessment of your risk for developing future dental disease. Some dentists also offer, either for a fee or as part of the recare visit, the use of adjunctive screening devices for early oral cancer detection. When indicated, dental radiographs are taken on a regular basis to further evaluate the teeth



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and supporting structures. Very few patients truly fall into this category of recare.

Most people do not have perfect oral health; they may suffer from some type of periodontal disease or gingivitis, may have multiple compromised fillings or cavities, may have jaw joint problems, etc. These recare appointments involve all of those components as the healthy individual plus an evaluation of the cause of the problems and development of a plan to address those problems. Consultations with specialists for referral may also be involved, as well as significant time spent for educating the patient about their needs. Sometimes, the “cleaning” at these appointments may need to be postponed due to the time spent addressing other concerns, or it may need to become a more in-depth form of therapy for gum disease like scaling and root planing.

Currently in 2009, the “dental check-up” appointment averages

around \$120, depending upon whether dental bitewing screening x-rays are indicated or whether there is an additional fee for adjunctive oral cancer screening technology use. Often, dentists recommend professional fluoride applications as well as part of routine recare. Fluoride varnish is effective for minimizing the number of cavities that develop over a lifetime by making the outer surfaces of the teeth more resistant to the acids generated by the bacteria that cause tooth decay. Since fluoride “build up” in teeth, the benefits of fluorides are best realized by routine professional applications. Realistically, ten professional fluoride applications over five years costs less than the cost of one filling to restore a cavity. Most would agree ... that’s a bargain!

Since lives are literally saved through these visits by identification of early oral cancer lesions, irregular blood pressures, and potentially life-threatening dental infections, it is alarming that people consider dental recare visits to be “optional” in their overall health plan. Please, please, please keep up with regular dental recare visits. Your life depends on it!

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*For questions about dental health or to schedule a complementary consultation, call 330-364-2011, visit [www.doctorhuff.net](http://www.doctorhuff.net), or ask your regular dentist.*