

Frequently Asked Questions



Peter K. Cocolis, Jr.,
DMD, PLC

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE VISITING THE DENTIST

Q: How often should I replace my toothbrush?

A: Replace your toothbrush every three or four months, or sooner if the bristles become frayed. A worn toothbrush will not do a good job of cleaning your teeth.

Q: What are some good tips for good oral hygiene?

- A:**
1. Brush your teeth twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste.
 2. Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner. Decay-causing bacteria still linger between teeth where toothbrush bristles can't reach. Flossing removes plaque and food particles from between the teeth and under the gum line.
 3. Eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks.
 4. Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams.

Q: What is plaque?

A: Sugared foods, such as candy and cookies, are not the only culprits. Starches, such as bread, crackers, and cereal, also cause acids to form. If you snack often, you could be having acid attacks all day long. After many acid attacks, your teeth may decay.

Plaque also produces substances that irritate the gums, making them red, tender, or apt to bleed easily. After a while, gums may pull away from the teeth. Pockets form and fill with more bacteria and pus. If the gums are not treated, the bone around the teeth can be destroyed. The teeth may become loose or have to be removed. In fact, periodontal (gum) disease is a main cause of tooth loss in adults.

One way to prevent tooth decay and periodontal (gum) disease is by eating a balanced diet and limiting the number of between-meal snacks. If you need a snack, choose nutritious foods such as raw vegetables, plain yogurt, cheese or a piece of fruit.

Q: How should I brush my teeth?

- A:**
1. Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against the gums.
 2. Move the brush back and forth gently in short (tooth-wide) strokes.
 3. Brush the outer tooth surfaces, the inner tooth surfaces, and the chewing surfaces of the teeth.
 4. Use the "toe" of the brush to clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth, using a gentle up-and-down stroke.
 5. Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen your breath.

Q: Should I brush or floss first?

A: The sequence makes no difference as long as you do a thorough job.

Q: How do I floss my teeth?

- A:**
1. Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.
 2. Guide the floss between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap the floss into the gums.
 3. When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth.
 4. Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.
 5. Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth.
 6. Don't forget the back side of your last tooth.

Q: What is gum disease?

A: In the broadest sense, the term gum disease – or periodontal disease – describes bacterial growth and production of factors that gradually destroy the tissue surrounding and supporting the teeth. "Periodontal" means "around the tooth."

Gum disease begins with plaque, which is always forming on your teeth, without you even knowing it. When it accumulates to excessive levels, it can harden into a substance called tartar (calculus) in as little as 24 hours. Tartar is so tightly bound to teeth that it can be removed only during a professional cleaning.

Gingivitis and periodontitis are the two main stages of gum disease. Each stage is characterized by what a dentist sees and feels in your mouth, and by what's happening under your gum line. Although gingivitis usually precedes periodontitis, it's important to know that not all gingivitis progresses to periodontitis.

Q: What causes a toothache?

- A:** Several possible causes of a toothache could include:
1. Dental decay.
 2. A fracture of the tooth.
 3. A cracked tooth. This may be invisible and so can be difficult to diagnose.
 4. Irritation of the pulp following dental treatment. Re-

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ardless of how well it is done, dental treatment and the materials used to fill the tooth can sometimes cause pain later.

5. An exposed tooth root, which can occur if the gums recede or are damaged by over-vigorous brushing.

Q: *What are some of the benefits of cosmetic dentistry?*

A: A great smile should improve your self-confidence, which can have a positive impact on the social and professional aspects of your life. Cosmetic dentistry is not just about pretty smiles though. New techniques and materials are available for back teeth as well as the ones you see when you smile. Now your mouth can look great, get healthy and function better at the same time.

Q: *How long does teeth whitening last?*

A: Teeth whitening is not a permanent procedure. Results can last for one or more years, depending upon your personal habits. In most cases, the whitening procedure is very effective and the patient is pleased with the results.

Q: *What causes discoloration of the teeth?*

A: Teeth enamel discoloration can be caused by staining, aging, or chemical damage to teeth. Some of the more common causes of teeth discoloration are medications, coffee, tea or cigarettes. People who drink significant amounts of cola soft drinks can experience similar staining.

Aside from staining, there are other factors that can affect the color of an individual's teeth. Genetics can play a role. Some people have naturally brighter enamel than others. Disease can also be a factor and certain medications can cause a discoloration of the teeth.

Q: *What can be done for missing teeth?*

A: Bridges are designed to replace missing teeth. Not only do they fill the unsightly spaces left by lost teeth, but they also help support the teeth adjacent to, and directly opposite, the missing teeth.

Q: *There's a big gap between my two front teeth. Can that be changed?*

A: Yes. Bonded veneers can close gaps and help create the smile you desire. Bonded resins generally require one office visit, while porcelain veneering takes two. Bonded veneers, along with good oral hygiene and a healthy lifestyle, are effective ways to enhance a smile. Dr. Cocolis as an experienced cosmetic dentist can explain the various techniques and help determine which is the best suited to your specific needs.

Q: *What are dental veneers?*

A: Veneers are thin slices of porcelain. These are precisely made to fit over the visible surface of front teeth and are an ideal way of treating discolored or unsightly teeth, closing gaps between front teeth, or repairing chips and cracks.

Q: *Can I have white fillings?*

A: For over 150 years standard fillings have been made out of a silvery-grey material called "amalgam." This is still one of the strongest and longest-lasting materials available for fillings. However, many people find it unattractive and some are concerned about possible health risks.

White fillings are now becoming a popular alternative to amalgam fillings. The new dental materials mean it is much easier to find a perfect match for the shade of a particular tooth. In most cases, it is quite impossible to see that the tooth even has a filling.

Q: *How often must I wear my Invisalign aligners?*

A: Invisalign only works while you are wearing the aligners. We recommend you wear your aligners full-time, day and night, except to eat, brush and floss your teeth.

Q: *Are their restrictions to what I can eat or drink?*

A: In general, no. Unlike traditional orthodontics, you can eat and drink anything you desire, because you remove your aligners.

Q: *Will wearing the Invisalign aligners affect my speech?*

A: Like all orthodontic treatments, aligners may temporarily affect your speech, and you may have a slight lisp for a while. However, you will get used to the aligners and the impediment should go away.

Q: *Will the treatment be painful?*

A: Most people experience tooth soreness for a few days after starting each new stage. This is normal. It is a sign that the aligners are working.

Q: *How do I clean my aligners?*

A: We recommend you brush your aligners every time you brush your teeth. So at least 2-3 times per day. Soaking them in a denture cleaner while you eat is another good idea. This will leave them clean and fresh.

Q: *Will other people easily notice when I am wearing Invisalign aligners?*

A: The Invisalign clear aligners are virtually undetectable to others.

Q: *Can I wear the aligners while eating?*

A: The aligners are removable for eating, brushing and flossing. No need to miss out on your favorite foods.

Q: *Will Invisalign be comfortable to wear?*

A: The Invisalign aligners are comfortable to wear, since there are no brackets, wires, or permanent fixtures.

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Q: *When should I begin cleaning my child's teeth?*

A: Once your child's teeth begin erupting, you can begin cleaning them by wiping them with a moist washcloth. As your child gets more teeth, you can begin to use a soft child's toothbrush. You should use just a pea-size amount of a fluoride toothpaste or a non-fluoride toothpaste (like Baby OraGel) until your child is able to spit it out (too much fluoride can stain their teeth).

Q: *Are thumb-sucking and pacifier habits harmful for a child's teeth?*

A: Thumb- and pacifier-sucking habits will generally only become a problem if they go on for a very long period of time. Most children stop these habits on their own, but if they are still sucking their thumbs or fingers when the permanent teeth arrive, a mouth appliance may be recommended by Dr. Cocolis.

Q: *Does my child need fluoride supplements?*

A: In general, yes. All children need supplemental fluoride after they are six months old to help prevent cavities. For most children, they can get this fluoride from the water they drink, if they are in an area where the city water supply has an adequate amount of fluoride in it (greater than 0.6 ppm), and they are drinking tap water.

Q: *Are baby teeth really that important to my child?*

A: Primary, or "baby," teeth are important for many reasons. Not only do they help children speak clearly and chew naturally, they also aid in forming a path that permanent teeth can follow when they are ready to erupt.

Q: *What can I do to protect my child's teeth during sporting events?*

A: Soft plastic mouthguards can be used to protect a child's teeth, lips, cheeks and gums from sport-related injuries. A custom-fitted mouthguard developed by Dr. Cocolis will protect your child from injuries to the teeth and face, and even provide protection from severe injuries to the head.

Q: *When should my child first see the dentist?*

A: Ideally a child's first visit should be as early as one year old and not later than two and a half years.

Q: *What are dental implants?*

A: Dental implants are substitutes for the roots of missing teeth. They act as an anchor for a replacement tooth or crown or a set of replacement teeth.

Q: *Am I a candidate for implants?*

A: Implant patients are of all ages and implants may be the right choice for anyone missing one or more teeth due to injury, disease or decay. They are especially practical for patients who can no longer wear removable dentures. Dr.

Cocolis, as an implant dentist can determine if you are a candidate for dental implants after a careful evaluation of your dental and medical history.

Q: *Are there different kinds of implants?*

A: There are many shapes, sizes and brands of implants available. Dr. Cocolis, as an implant dentist will know which implant is the right one for you.

Q: *Do I have enough bone?*

A: It is important for a patient to have enough bone to support the implant. If you do not have enough bone, there are many safe and effective ways to correct bone deficiency. Dr. Cocolis will assess this and advise you if additional bone material is needed.

Q: *Will this take a long time?*

A: Treatment time can vary greatly depending on your needs. Each situation needs a separate evaluation; Dr. Cocolis will be able to give you an approximate timetable.

FAQ'S