

# ShowMe Health

## Dental Health

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Dentists say that the most important part of tooth care happens at home. Brushing and flossing properly, along with regular dental checkups, can help prevent tooth decay and gum disease.

The main reason for going to the dentist regularly- every six months is **PREVENTION**. The goal is to prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and other disorders that put the health of your teeth and mouth at risk.

Your first consultation with a dentist will probably consist of three main parts: a dental and medical history, (the dentist or dental hygienist asks you questions about your tooth care and reviews any dental records, a dental examination, and a professional cleaning.

He will examine your teeth, gums and other mouth tissues. The dentist will use a mirror and probe (a metal pick-lick instrument) to check the crown of each tooth for plaque and evidence of looseness or decay. The dentist also will check your bite and the way your teeth fit together (called occlusion).

He will examine the general condition of your gums, which should be firm and pink, not soft, swollen, or inflamed. After examining the visible parts of your teeth and mouth, your dentist will take x-rays that might reveal tooth decay, abscesses (collections of pus surrounded by swollen tissue,) or impacted wisdom teeth.

Professional cleaning is usually performed by a dental hygienist, a specially trained and licensed dental professional. Cleaning consists mainly of removing hard deposits using a scaler (a scraping instrument) or an ultrasonic machine, which uses high-frequency sound waves to loosen plaque deposits. The particles are then rinse off with water.

After cleaning, the dentist will polish your teeth. The process cleans and smoothes the surfaces of the teeth, removing stains and making it harder for plaque to stick to the teeth.

At the end of your visit, the dentist will let you know if you need to return to fill a cavity. Your dentist also may refer you to orthodontist if he or she thinks you may need braces or have other issues.

Dental caries (tooth decay) can attack the teeth at any age. Losing teeth affects how you look and feel about yourself as well as our ability to chew and speak. Treating caries is also expensive. So prevention and early treatment are important.

Healthy smiles begin by brushing your teeth two times a day. Brush once in the morning and again in the evening before bed. Apply a small amount of toothpaste to a soft bristled toothbrush. Tilt the brush at an angle against the gum line. Brush only two – three teeth at a time. Gently brush the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of all your teeth. Use short back and forth or small circular strokes. Brush your teeth for about 2 minutes. Gently brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen your breath.

Volunteer Marilyn Broadmerkle, dental hygienist who helps with the health center’s Dental Varnish program, teaches kids the song, “Up like a rocket, down like the rain...back and forth like a choo-choo train.” This simple tune helps kids remember to brush all their teeth.

The Livingston County Health Center holds clinics throughout the year at the health center, schools, and some preschools in the county. This year, 170 kids have been seen by a volunteer dentist or hygienist for a dental screening. The dental (fluoride) varnish is applied twice a year after the screening. This screening does not take the place of a checkup at the dentist.

The fluoride varnish is:

- Painted on teeth and dries very quickly and may cause teeth to be yellow. This can be brushed off the next day.
- Proven to prevent or stop early tooth decay.
- Safe and beneficial for all ages.
- Easy to apply.
- Cost effective
- And is known as **A SMILE SAVER!!!**

Source: <http://kidshealth.org>

All services of the health center are provided on a non-discriminatory basis.