

Eggert Family Dentistry

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Frequently Asked Questions and Quick Facts for Prevention

When should my child first see a dentist?

We like to start seeing your child soon after his or her 2nd birthday. We don't expect too much from the first visit, but want to give your child a chance to get comfortable with his or her dental home. It also allows for us to have a discussion about nutrition and good food and drink habits. Early examination and preventative care will protect your child's smile now and in the future.

What are dental sealants?

Dental sealants are made of a plastic, resin filling material. This material is applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, premolars and molars, and bonds into the depressions and grooves (pits and fissures). Sealants act as a barrier, protecting enamel from cavity causing bacteria and acids.

Thorough brushing and flossing help to remove food particles and plaque from smooth surfaces of teeth. But, toothbrush bristles cannot reach all the way into the depressions and grooves to extract food and bacteria. Sealants protect these vulnerable areas by "sealing out" bacteria and food.

Why do I need x-rays?

Dental radiographs (x-rays) are an important tool to show us the condition of your teeth, roots, bone, and surrounding tissues. They also allow us to detect periodontal disease, tooth or tissue abscesses, abnormal growths, and can pinpoint locations of tooth decay. Think of dental radiographs as a dental magnifying glass, allowing us to detect minor changes and conditions before they become major problems.

Frequently Asked Questions and Quick Facts for Restorations

I have a space between my two front teeth. How can it be closed?

There are several ways in which this can be corrected.

1. Orthodontics is often the most conservative way
2. Cosmetic Bonding
3. Porcelain veneers
4. Crowns

What is a crown?

A dental crown is a custom created natural looking "cap" that is placed over a tooth. The crown covers the tooth and restores its shape, size, strength, and can improve the tooth's appearance.

Crowns can be fabricated entirely from porcelain, from a mixture of porcelain and metal (PFM), or from all gold. When cemented into place, the crown fully encases the visible portion of the tooth and sits at the level of the gum tissue.

Why would I need a dental crown?

- To protect a weak tooth, due to extensive dental decay or cracking
- To restore a broken tooth or a tooth that has been severely worn down
- To cover and support a tooth with a large filling if there isn't a lot of natural tooth remaining
- To stop a cracked tooth from completely splitting
- To hold a dental bridge and/or partial denture in place
- To enhance the cosmetic appearance of discolored or misshapen teeth
- To restore dental implants

How long do dental crowns last?

The life span of a crown depends a lot on how well the crown is maintained. Impeccable home care is the key to a long-lasting crown. Things that can decrease the life-expectancy of a crown include the amount of "wear and tear" the crown is exposed to, poor home oral hygiene practices, and personal mouth-related habits like grinding or clenching teeth, chewing ice, biting fingernails, and using teeth to open packages. Under ideal circumstances it is common to get 20 or more years out of a crown. However, with poor maintenance, a crown may last less than 5 years.

How would I know if I have a cracked tooth?

Some cracked teeth have no symptoms. However, given enough time, a cracked tooth will usually exhibit a sharp pain with cold, hot, and/or chewing. This pain may come and go over time. It is important to diagnose a crack before it goes too far and the tooth splits. To help decrease the aggravation of the tooth it is best to avoid eating hard foods and to chew on the opposite side of your mouth.

Teeth can crack due to a number of factors, the most common being

- biting on hard objects such as hard candy, ice, nuts or even crunchy foods like a carrot
- grinding or clenching teeth (especially when sleeping)
- a severe hit, or trauma to the mouth

Spotting a crack on a tooth can be challenging, as some hairline fractures are too small to be seen without a microscope. By asking the right questions and by running a few tests on the teeth, Dr Eggert should be able to determine if and where you have a cracked tooth. Sometimes the nerve tissue in a cracked tooth becomes irreversibly inflamed and root canal therapy may be necessary.

Frequently Asked Questions and Quick Facts for Dental Disease

What is decay or a cavity?

Decay is caused by bacteria living in the mouth. The bacteria eat away at the tooth surface and cause a cavitation in the tooth. The bacteria that cause decay are always present, but can become especially active with certain food and drink. Sugary and acidic foods make the teeth especially vulnerable to the decay-causing bacteria.

To prevent decay, follow our recommended home hygiene regimen and come for regular dental visits to our office. Should you still get decay, we can repair the tooth a number of ways depending on your situation.

What is periodontal (gum) disease?

Periodontal (gum) disease is an infection of the tissues surrounding and supporting the teeth. It is a major cause of tooth loss in adults. Because periodontal disease is usually painless, you may not know you have it.

Periodontal disease is caused by plaque, a sticky film of bacteria that constantly forms on the teeth. These bacteria create toxins that can damage the gums. In the early stage of periodontal disease, called *gingivitis*, the gums can become red, swollen, and bleed easily. At this stage, the disease is still reversible and can usually be eliminated by good daily brushing and flossing habits.

In the more advanced stages of periodontal disease, called *periodontitis*, the gums and bone that support the teeth can become seriously damaged. The teeth can become loose, fall out, or have to be removed by a dentist.

We can help you fight and treat periodontal disease. By following our recommended home hygiene regimen and with regular visits to our office, this disease can be kept under control.

What is involved in root canal treatment?

Root canal treatment is treatment for a tooth abscess or for a tooth with irreversibly inflamed nerve tissue. Treatment often takes anywhere from one to three visits. Initially, the treatment is a lot like getting a filling done. The tooth will be put to sleep and a rubber dam isolation unit will be placed around the tooth. During treatment, the diseased pulp is removed from the tooth. The pulp chamber and root canal(s) inside the tooth are then cleaned, sterilized, and sealed. The tooth generally requires more treatment after the root canal treatment is completed with a crown or a filling.