



**Faculty of General Dental Practitioners (UK)
of The Royal College of Surgeons of England**

*Promoting Quality in General Dental
Practice*

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PRESS RELEASE

How Often Should I go to the Dentist?

You are probably used to being told by your dentist that you need a check-up every six months. But new guidelines issued by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) advise dentists to match check-up appointments more closely to each individual's needs. ¹

Under the new arrangements, the dentist will assess the oral health of the patient, discuss the findings and agree a care plan with the patient that will include the suggested gap before the next check-up. This interval may be longer or shorter at different times in a patient's life, depending on teeth and other changes in health and lifestyle, but will vary between a minimum of three months and a maximum of 24 months for adults and twelve months for children. The guideline provides a checklist of factors which dentists should take into account when determining recall intervals.

Eleanor Grey, patient representative on the guideline's development group and former lay chairman of the Faculty of General Dental Practitioners (UK)'s lay advisory group, says, "Patients will benefit from having an individual assessment of when it is advisable for them to return for their next check-up. Six-monthly checks are unnecessary for many adults who maintain good oral health. This guideline promotes patients' involvement in decisions about their dental treatment and encourages better communication between dentist and patient."

Mike Mulcahy, dean of FGDP(UK), said, "This guideline is not about saving the NHS money, but about using the dentist's and the patient's time more effectively. At each check-up your dentist will judge your risk of developing future problems. They may suggest seeing you in three months time, particularly if you are having a problem controlling the level of dental disease. But if your teeth and mouth are healthy – and

this appears to be stable – you may be given an appointment for two years time. I would expect that most people will have a check-up somewhere in between. Personally I welcome advice that promotes dialogue between patient and dentist and gives the patient greater responsibility in the management of their oral health.”

¹ *Dental recall: recall interval between routine dental examinations. NICE Guideline, National Institute for Clinical Excellence, October 2004.* The full guideline will be available to download from the Royal College of Surgeons’ website (www.rcseng.ac.uk). Hard copies may also be ordered at cost from the National Collaborating Centre for Acute Care (contact Jennifer Wood at jwood@rcseng.ac.uk).

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Notes to Editors

1. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is part of the NHS. It is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on treatments and care for people using the NHS in England and Wales. NICE guidance is developed using the expertise of the NHS and wider healthcare community including NHS staff, healthcare professionals, patients and carers, industry and the academic community. For further information , visit www.nice.org.uk

2. The Faculty of General Dental Practitioners (UK) is the academic home of general dental practitioners in the UK. The Faculty aims to improve standards of patient care in general dental practice by encouraging involvement in relevant examinations, education, training and research. For further information, visit www.rcseng.ac.uk/fgdp