

# Co-Diagnosis

## A complete examination

We want you to understand what is included in a thorough dental examination because we believe it is vital for you to be an active participant in your oral care. That way, we can work together to maintain and improve your oral health.

It is important to regularly monitor the health of your mouth because dental problems can grow quickly and lead to worsening infections, tooth loss, and an unattractive appearance. Regular examinations help us keep your mouth healthy and your smile beautiful. When we examine your mouth, we usually look for signs of tooth decay, periodontal disease, and any problems with your bite.

## Tooth decay

Tooth decay is caused by acids that are produced by certain kinds of bacteria in the mouth. These acids dissolve tooth structure and cause cavities in the teeth.

Some cavities are easy to see, but for hard-to-find cavities, we may use a dental explorer. A dental explorer sticks slightly when it contacts decayed surfaces on the tops and sides of your teeth.

We also use x-rays to look for decay inside and between teeth. Cavities show up on x-rays as dark spots.



*Bite problems affect the TMJ*



*Bone loss*

## Periodontal disease

Periodontal disease is an infection of the teeth and gums that causes the jawbone to recede and the gums to pull away from the tooth, creating pockets in the gums. Since you may have no pain or other symptoms with periodontal disease, we use visual examination, a periodontal probe, and x-rays to look for it.

During your examination, we look for red and swollen gums. We use a periodontal probe to measure the depth of the gums from the bottom of the pocket where it is attached to the tooth, to the top of the gums.

A probe reading of more than 3 millimeters is a sign of periodontal disease, and the deeper the pockets, the greater the spread of the disease. Sometimes gums bleed when we probe them; bleeding is also a sign of infection. Healthy gums do not bleed.

X-rays also show us a lot about periodontal disease. In a healthy mouth, the bone comes up high around the necks of the teeth, and it is even throughout the mouth. In advanced periodontal disease, the bone level is much lower and often uneven.

## Bite problems

During your checkup, we inspect your bite. When you chew, a healthy bite allows all of your teeth to hit simultaneously, your chewing muscles to contract evenly, and your jaw joint to be seated into its proper position.

However, a bad bite or misaligned teeth can trap plaque and bacteria, leading to periodontal disease and tooth decay. Bite problems can cause tooth grinding and clenching, tooth sensitivity, and the loss of tooth structure near the gumline. They can also contribute to difficulties with your jaw joint, the TMJ.