

A PATIENT'S GUIDE TO

DENTAL TREATMENT

DOUGLAS HAMILL DDS



FOREWORD

One of the most vital components of your well-being is your oral hygiene. Daily care of your teeth and gums is essential in preventing diseases and chronic conditions such as gingivitis and cavities. Brushing and flossing in the morning and the evening are important, but your responsibility to your dental health does not stop there; regular visits to your local dentist will allow you to both brighten your smile and thwart the buildup of plaque.

Our practice has served the Buffalo area for almost 17 years, and we are committed to helping all our patients to maintain and improve their oral health. In addition to teeth whitening and related cosmetic procedures, our office also offers targeted, individualized care to patients who need additional help with safeguarding their teeth and healing their gums. Contemporary studies have suggested a link between tooth and gum disease and overall health, with infections in the roots of teeth having the potential to enter the bloodstream and cause cardiac issues. If you are in the market for a tooth cleaning or you need dental work done, we provide a range of comprehensive and affordable services for all our clients.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF DOUGLAS HAMILL, DDS

Our office provided dental care to the Buffalo Jills for over five years. In addition, when I graduated from dental school, I received a recommendation to join a dentistry practice in Syracuse. I worked at this practice for a decade, and I also taught locally for eight years. I eventually returned to my hometown of Buffalo, where I have provided dental care to the community for the past 17 years.

What separates our office from other offices our calm and relaxed attitude. We treat all our patients as family. We try to minimize wait time, admitting our

clients within five or ten minutes of their appointments. We show our patients our plans for their dental care using our Intra-Oral camera, and we then take digital X-rays. Because our practice is small, all of our work is one-on-one. You will work with the same dentist and the same hygienist at every one of your appointments.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

What should I expect at my first appointment?

Before your appointment, as you fill out a health history, you can relax, have a cup of coffee, and watch television. During your cleaning, you can continue to relax, and I will check in with you once your procedure has finished.

Do you accept dental insurance?

We accept most dental insurances. We will fill out the forms for you and submit them on your behalf, and you will pay the balance. If you have dental insurance, we do not charge up front; we bill the insurance company and collect the copay afterwards. We will work with you to find a payment plan that fits your budget. We also offer CareCredit.

VISITING THE DENTIST

How often should you visit the dentist?

The frequency of visits should depend on the condition of the mouth. If a patient's mouth is in good health, we recommend visits every six months. There are several signs that can occur that would cause a person to want to see a dentist: tooth sensitivity, broken teeth, bleeding gums. If the patient has a buildup of plaque or the beginning of gum disease, we would instead recommend check-ups three months. When a more advanced gum disease is present, we may even recommend alternating visits every three months between our practice and a periodontist.

Why should you visit the dentist regularly?

If you do not have regular checkups with a dentist, much larger problems can occur. We like to catch things early. If a cavity develops, it is quicker and less expensive to treat it immediately. If a patient lets the cavity get to the nerve, a root canal and a crown may be needed.

DENTAL WORK ALONGSIDE MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Can I have dental work done when I am pregnant?

Dental treatment is perfectly acceptable during pregnancy, though we recommend that pregnant women receive dental work during their second trimester. Before scheduling any visits to a dentist, it is important to check with your physician to make sure that dental work will not pose any risk to your health and the health of your baby. Most pregnant women are fit to go to the dentist, get their teeth cleaned, and even have fillings done.

Can I have dental work done if I have diabetes?

Diabetes can be a major problem if it is not kept under control. Some complications include the increased risks of swelling and irritation in the gums. People with diabetes are also far more prone to developing infections. It is crucial to ensure that you are able to manage your diabetes before you seek care from a dentist.

RECOMMENDED DENTAL CARE PRODUCTS

The most important ingredient in toothpaste is fluoride. Fluoride is an ion that both prevents tooth decay and strengthens the enamel against the acids that are naturally produced in the mouth. Any fluoridated toothpaste will be effective in preventing cavities and gingivitis. Though brushing and flossing are paramount, using mouthwash with fluoride can also be beneficial.

PREVENTING CAVITIES

How can I prevent cavities?

Preventing cavities is simple, but it requires a lot of commitment. Cavities can be halted through basic home care: brushing, flossing, using mouthwash, and reducing your intake of sugar. Regular visits to your dentist, including teeth cleanings every three to six months, are also beneficial. If you follow all these instructions, you should get fewer cavities.

Foods with high sugar content are the most damaging to your dental health. In order for plaque to build up or a cavity to develop, sugar must be present in the mouth. You should not only brush and floss after you have sugar but also limit your consumption of sugar in the first place.

Why should I floss?

Flossing is critical in preventing cavities from occurring in between the teeth. When you brush your teeth, all you clean are the surfaces that you can see. You cannot really clean in between the teeth with a toothbrush, and this is where dental floss can make up the difference.

COMMON ORAL PROBLEMS

What are the causes of darkened teeth, morning breath, and canker sores?

Darkening in the teeth is often caused by imbibing liquids such as tea, wine, and coffee, though the general process of aging can also play a role. Morning breath is usually caused by plaque on the teeth, around the gums, and on the tongue. To have a better chance at stopping



morning breath in its tracks, before you go to bed, you should brush your teeth, floss, and try to clean your tongue with your toothbrush. Numerous factors such as trauma, vigorous brushing, smoking, and consumption of spicy foods can contribute to the development of canker sores.

Can bad oral care affect my overall health?

Though the teeth, the tongue, and the mouth make up only a small part of the body, an issue with any of them can influence your health. A recent study found a definitive connection between oral health disease and heart disease and stroke. According to the results of the study, the plaque that builds up around the teeth or due to gingivitis can release bacteria into the bloodstream. This bacteria in turn travels to the heart and can cause a blockage.

BLEEDING AND RECEDING GUMS

Why do I have bleeding gums?

Seeing blood when you brush your teeth is often a signal that something is wrong with your gums and that you have a buildup of plaque. Dentists recommend brushing and flossing twice a day, and it is never too late to start. If regular brushing and flossing do not seem to help reduce or eliminate the bleeding in your gums, you should make an appointment with your local dentist. Notify your dentist that your gums are bleeding and that you might need a deep cleaning or a scaling to correct the issue.

What causes receding gums?

Though you may be committed to your dental health, brushing your teeth too hard can in fact result in gingival recession, or receding gums. You must take care when you brush to not scrub back and forth too hard, and make sure that you use a soft toothbrush. Another common cause of gingival recession is grinding. If you grind your teeth in your sleep or while you are awake, the gums can recede. There are options available to fix problems such as grinding, and your dentist will be able to provide proper guidance.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease can set in when your gums start reacting to plaque buildup on the surface of the teeth. When gum disease emerges, you can expect your gums to become red and swollen, and they may begin to bleed easily. If this is not corrected, gum disease can lead to periodontitis, which is when the bone below or above the teeth starts to be effected.

CAVITIES AND FILLINGS

How are cavities filled?

Fillings vary according to the size of the cavity. If you have a large cavity, we will administer local anesthesia, drill out the cavity, place a dentine bonding agent in the space, insert the white filling, and harden the filling with light. This procedure is typically smooth and simple. The cost of a filling depends on how many surfaces of the tooth it covers. Generally, the cost ranges from \$100 to \$200.



Most fillings are made now from composite, synthetic resin. There are many companies that manufacture this material, and due to its popularity, cost efficiency, and versatility, we use composite resin as a filling material in all our dental procedures. There has been much debate about the safety and usefulness of mercury amalgam fillings, another trendy option. There is no scientific consensus on the matter, but nevertheless, our office has not used amalgam mercury filling in over 10 years.

How long do fillings last?

Fillings will last for quite some time. The material used in fillings is strong and once it has been bonded to a tooth, the filling will remain in place for years. The exact length of time that a filling will last depends mostly on its location on the tooth. If the filling is at the gum line or the very edge of a tooth, it might not last as long as it would if it were on a flat surface.

Will I be in pain after a filling?

Once a filling is done, there is usually no pain. If the cavity was deep and near a nerve, there is a chance that the nerve could react, and you may have pain afterwards. If the pain persists, you should notify your dentist as soon as you can.

What are the types of fillings?

An indirect filling is when a dentist takes an impression of a tooth, the filling is cast, and the filling is then cemented into the tooth. There are temporary fillings, but “temporary” is the operative word. These fillings are recommended only for when you are waiting on a more permanent option to be installed at a later point.

PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Periodontitis is a gingival disease that affects both the gums and the bone. The condition starts out as gingivitis, which is largely limited to inflammation of the gums. This disease can progress, becoming periodontitis and beginning to dissolve the bone around the roots of the teeth. That’s the number one cause of people losing their teeth and they end up with dentures. If you notice inflammation of the gums, turning red and swollen, you should let your dentist know right away.

SENSITIVE TEETH

What causes tooth sensitivity?

Sensitivity in the teeth is noticeable when they are exposed to heat and cold or during biting. This sensitivity can develop when the dentin, which is the inner part of the tooth, is exposed. Brushing teeth too hard can result in the enamel or the cementum around the tooth wearing away. Sensitivity can also be indicative of a cavity, so you should consult your dentist if you begin to experience pain when eating hot or cold foods. Too much sensitivity can kill a nerve and cause a root canal.

How can tooth sensitivity be treated?

There are many causes of sensitive teeth. Mild sensitivity can be accommodated by using a toothpaste such as Sensodyne or Denquel, which are designed for sensitive teeth. If the sensitivity becomes more extensive, for example, due to a hole in the tooth, a bonded filling can help.

SAVING A KNOCKED-OUT TOOTH

When you have a tooth that has been knocked out, the first thing you should do is either put it in milk or stick it under your tongue. Rinsing and cleaning the tooth or keeping it separate from your mouth can prevent the tooth from eventually reintegrating back into the bone. Our office puts the knocked-out tooth in its original socket and bonds it to the adjacent teeth, sparing our patient the necessity of a root canal. Usually, teeth can be saved by following these steps.

DENTAL BONDING

What is dental bonding?

Dental bonding is when your dentist uses a bonding agent to place a white filling made of composite resin that look just like teeth. We fill a tooth with the resin, giving the appearance that the original tooth has regrown. Bonded teeth are treated just as other teeth are; the patient's responsibility is to brush them, floss them, and keep them clean.

How long does the bonding material last?

The material has been shown to last a long time. As with any filling, of course, the length that the bonding material lasts is dependent on both the area where the filling is placed and the size of the filling. Larger fillings require a crown to be installed on the outer surface. Smaller fillings have a duration resembling that of a silver filling, though dental bonding does not create the discoloration typical of silver fillings.

How much does dental bonding cost?

The cost of dental bonding is reasonable. Our office can construct a tooth for under \$200, but installing crowns can increase the expense. All forms of dental insurance should cover dental bonding, as the procedure is a basic, routine coverage.

DENTAL BRIDGES

What are dental bridges?

These structures utilize the teeth on either side of a missing tooth to serve as the anchors for bridges, which are essentially groups of crowns all cast together. Dental bridges have fallen out of fashion lately, as implants have become more and more preferred.

What are the main types of dental bridges?

A fixed dental bridge is a bridge that is immovable; it is held in place using cement or screws, and only a dentist can remove this type of bridge. A cantilever bridge is a structure in which the false tooth is anchored to only one neighboring tooth. Another type of bridge that can be used is a resin-bonded bridge. These are not as strong as fixed and cantilever bridges, but they are both less expensive and not permanent. Unlike the two aforementioned bridges, which entail the filing of the teeth adjacent to the empty space in order to make room for the structure to be installed, resin-bonded bridges are put in place by inserting a false tooth with metal wings into the space. Then, your dentist will use resin to bond the wings to the adjacent teeth.

DENTAL CROWNS

What are dental crowns?

A dental crown is a cap that is placed over the tooth to protect it from fracturing after the installation of a filling, significant restoration, or a recent root canal. Crowns can also have cosmetic appeal.

Dental crowns are needed when the teeth have physically and superficially deteriorated. Crowns enforce teeth and reduce the appearance of discoloration. In the majority of our patients, crowns usually last seven to 10 years. However, with careful, routine maintenance, we have seen crowns last far longer than a decade. You should treat a tooth with a crown the same as you treat your other teeth; you must brush it, floss it, keep it clean, and avoid foods that negatively affect dental health.

What types of dental crowns are available?

Recent advances in dental care and technology have introduced many new options for crowns. Dental crowns used to largely consist of a porcelain sheen over a metal inside; now, however, most crowns are made of the more aesthetically pleasing porcelain. Of particular note is a crown made from a ceramic called yttria-stabilized zirconia, which is especially strong and durable.



Will I need a root canal if I get a dental crown?

Some dentists prefer to perform root canals on patients before they install crowns. This is not the philosophy of our office, though; we like to avoid the root canal if at all possible. Our office always tries to install crowns without root canals if they are not needed right away.

How much do dental crowns cost?

A dental crown is typically more expensive than a filling is. Our office works with patients to make crowns as affordable as possible. We collaborate to devise payment plans and even CareCredit; it all depends on what our patients are able to pay and when. Most insurances will cover dental crowns after you have received dental work from the same dentist for at least one year.

DENTAL IMPLANTS

What are dental implants?

An implant is a prosthesis, an artificial appliance, that is used to replace missing teeth. The advantages of implants include their duration and their lack of impact on other teeth. Implants can last a long time—for years or even decades. They can also replace teeth without affecting the teeth around them. Implants are composed of three parts: the part that is affixed to the bone, a post, and a crown.

If there is a space between two teeth, especially where another tooth has fallen out, and the teeth are starting to shift, the best solution is often a dental implant. The rejection rate of dental implants is quite small; only one to two percent of patients exhibit the signs of rejection. Our office has installed hundreds of implants, and only one of our patients has ever rejected an implant. For that patient, once we replaced the implant with a similar one of a different material, the rejection ceased. Age should not play a role in determining eligibility for an implant; we worked with one patient over the age of 90, and each of the several implants that we installed were successful.

Are dental implants noticeable?

In most cases, dental implants blend in perfectly with the surrounding teeth. They look so natural that the only way to ascertain which of an individual's teeth was an implant would be by taking an X-ray. Installing a dental implant is essentially painless; our office administers a local anesthetic, and once the area has become numb, we place the implant in the space between the teeth. The site is usually sore for a few days after the operation, but our patients rarely report any ache or pain after that time.

How does the dental implant procedure work?

Our office enlists the top oral surgeons in the Buffalo area to place the implants, and then I place the post and crown on the base of the implants. The bottom part of an implant must be screwed into the mandible or the maxilla, which are the bones of the jaw and the roof of the mouth. This process may sound unpleasant

and painful, but it is necessary in order to allow the implant to remain permanently in place. We use an anesthetic to numb our patients, so there is no pain that occurs during the operation. The surgeon is the most experienced at placing the implant, and the material used at the implant's base will easily and directly bond to the bone.

Once the dental implant is placed, there is a period of roughly three months during which the implant integrates into the maxilla or the mandible. Then, we are able to perform the restorative part of the procedure, which involves the installation of the false tooth.

What habits should I avoid after I have had a dental implant installed?

The main habit to cut out is smoking, which can affect the way by which the implant will adjust to the body. You must try to cut down on or quit smoking. Smokeless tobacco is considered less harmful than regular tobacco, but it can still affect the quality and stability of your dental implant.

How much do dental implants cost?

The biggest challenge with dental implants is the expense. Implants are often more expensive than a simple bridge is. Our office offers our patients payment plans, which can be adjusted based on financial need. More and more insurances are starting to cover dental implants, and we expect the cost of implants to decrease in the coming years.

DENTURES

What should I do if I need dentures?

If you feel that you need dentures, the first thing is to schedule a checkup with your dentist. If all your teeth are significantly infected with periodontal disease or extensive decay, you may be a strong candidate for dentures. However, teeth can be saved, and we prefer to try to save teeth before we consider replacing them.

There are two basic types of dentures: those with metal frames and those without. Dentures made of materials other than metal can be more cosmetically pleasing, but those made of metal are often more durable. There is not much pain involved in receiving dentures. Soreness can ensue if teeth must be extracted before a patient can be fit for dentures. If your new dentures create sore spots in your mouth, your dentist will have to relieve the spot that is causing the pain.

Dentures can be inserted during the same day as the removal of the diseased teeth. These dentures are called immediate dentures. However, this kind of denture often must be either relined or replaced as the tissues of the mouth heal and shrink.

How do I care for dentures?

It is not recommended to brush dentures. Most pharmacies sell over-the-counter solutions that will clean your dentures during an overnight soaking. It is inadvisable to sleep in dentures every night, as the teeth will need to soak in order for plaque and bacteria to be removed. Your oral tissues will also benefit from overnight exposure to air.

Whether you can eat normally depends on the fit of the dentures and how much bony ridge exists in your mouth. It is difficult when you are wearing dentures to chew as well as you could with your original teeth. For this reason, we always recommend trying to save the teeth, if at all possible. If your denture becomes loose and you are experiencing difficulty when you are eating or talking, it could be time to relin your denture.

How much do dentures cost?

We try to keep the cost of dentures reasonable at our office. We do offer payment plans to help pay for them. Your dental insurance will likely cover part of the cost of dentures.

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY



When should children start receiving regular care from a dentist?

Our office recommends that children have their first visit to a dentist around the age of three.

Behavior is a key factor; if a child will sit still at the age of two, he or she can see a dentist then. We also recommend that parents informally examine their children's mouths and look for potential issues such as broken teeth or dark spots. If any dental problems appear, parents should contact a pediatric dentist immediately.

When do baby teeth fall out?

The timeline for baby teeth to fall out fluctuates based on the individual. The front teeth (the incisors) generally begin to fall out when a child reaches the age of five or six years. The back teeth, though, may fall out as early as the age of nine or as late as the onset of puberty, around the same time as the second molars grow in.

Should children receive a dental sealant?

Dental sealants can be particularly effective in terms of preventing cavities. These are effectively seals that can be placed over the permanent teeth when they emerge. Dental sealants are recommended for children between the ages of six and 14. They last for several years, and the sealants can help to prevent cavities getting in the grooves of the teeth.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Which types of new technologies do you have?

We have several new technologies at our office. Our digital X-ray emits far less radiation than a typical X-ray, and the scan is available immediately on a computer. Another unique instrument at our office is the Intra-Oral camera that we use to take photos of every patient's teeth. Our patients are able to witness the progress of their teeth before, during, and after each operation.

Why do dentists need to take X-rays?

X-rays are essential to our care for our patients. There are many areas of the mouth, such as the space between the teeth and the bone, that are invisible or unnoticeable without the use of an X-ray. It is important to check for abscesses, hidden tooth decay, and similar chronic dental issues with X-ray scans.

Dental X-rays involve low doses of radiation, and digital X-rays reduce the amount of radiation even further. To illustrate, our digital X-ray scans emit the same amount of radiation as less than two minutes of exposure to sunlight.

PORCELAIN VENEERS

Can I still get cavities even when I have porcelain veneers?

Yes, you can. With the veneers, you do have to keep them clean at all times, as it is possible to get a cavity in the space between the teeth and the veneers. Because the tooth under the veneer is still a regular tooth, you must maintain your veneers as if they were actual teeth.

How durable are porcelain veneers?

Porcelain veneers can last for years. The veneers that our office typically utilizes in our work with patients do come with a warranty of approximately five years, but the veneers can last longer. Veneers are quite stain-resistant. After several

years, they might begin to develop minor stains, but they generally maintain their structure and color for some time.

How well do veneers match the color of my teeth?

If you do not place veneers on every tooth, it can be a small challenge to match the color of the other teeth. What we have found is that we can often match veneers to our patients' teeth on site. In less typical cases, we send the patient to our nearby lab, where the technicians can create a custom match.

How much do porcelain veneers cost?

The cost of veneers ranges among dentists. Our office charges around \$950 a veneer. If our patient chooses Lumineers, a more cosmetic option, the charge is closer to \$1,050 per veneer, but because this option is longer-lasting, the higher cost can justify the duration. Porcelain veneers are sometimes covered by insurance.

TEETH WHITENING

How long do the results of teeth whitening last?

Whitening teeth may be a quick process, but it requires long-term upkeep. An initial whitening takes about seven to 10 days, an hour at a time. We recommend doing a touch up once every two months, as your teeth will not maintain their whiteness if treatment does not continue at regular intervals.

How much does teeth whitening cost?

There are two types of whitening that we provide. We have a take-home option, in which we create models of your teeth and design trays and you whiten your teeth at home. This treatment costs \$299. Our Zoom option, in which we bleach your teeth at our office and give you the trays afterwards, costs \$499. We also have specials every month. If you are interested, our office will let you know if we are currently offering any discounts.

Does teeth whitening affect crowns or fillings?

Tooth whitening will not affect crowns or any fillings. If you have a cavity, it is recommended not to whiten your teeth while the cavity is active. What you have to keep in mind, though, is that if you have several teeth that have crowns and other teeth that you want to whiten, the crowns are not going to whiten as well as the other teeth will.

Does whitening toothpaste work?

Whitening toothpaste will not lighten your teeth to any measurable degree. The toothpaste can help reduce stains on the enamel, but it will not internally bleach the teeth.

Can teeth whitening damage your teeth?

As long as you follow the regular regimen that your dentist has assigned, there should not be any damage. If you over-bleach your teeth or whiten your teeth more often than you are supposed to, there may be complications.