

Preventative Services:

At Dr. Harding's dental office we not only provide services that address your dental needs, we also provide you with preventive services and education that aid in the prevention of future dental diseases and oral conditions.

The most effective way to maintain nature dentition and the supporting structures of your dentition is through a cooperative patient, dentist and dental staff relationship. A good relationship with effort on both ends will be key in preventing the onset, progression and recurrence of dental diseases. We promise to do our part in this relationship!

Preventative Services Include:

- Clinical Dental Examination
- Head and Neck Cancer Screening
- Cleaning
- Digital Radiographs (x-rays)
- In Office Fluoride Treatment
- Dental Sealants

Dental Exam:

At your initial new patient visit with us Dr. Harding will perform a comprehensive dental exam. At your scheduled cleaning appointments you will receive check up exams using information gathered by your dental hygienist. These exams will incorporate:

- **Diagnostic digital x-rays (radiographs):** These are essential for detecting decay, tumors, cysts and bone loss not visible through a visual examination. X-rays are taken so that the surfaces between your teeth are visible. They are also taken to determine tooth positioning, detection of tumors, cysts and bone loss.
- **Cavity Risk Assessment:** Dr. Harding will complete a clinical examination using special instruments, examine x-rays and discuss diet choices to determine if tooth decay or if you may be at risk for future decay.
- **Examination of existing restorations:** Your current crowns, bridges, fillings will be examined both clinically and with x-rays to determine decay, fractures or any signs of break down are present.
- **Oral cancer screening:** Your hygienist and Dr. Harding will check face, neck, oral tissues, tongue, gums, salivary glands and throat for abnormalities and signs of cancer.
- **Gum disease evaluation (Perio Charting):** We will regularly measure where the gums attach to the teeth to determine if there has been any bone loss and any sign of periodontal disease.

Periodontal Treatment:

Diagnosis

Periodontal disease is diagnosed by your dentist or dental hygienist during a *periodontal examination*.[□]

This type of exam should always be part of your regular dental check-up.

A periodontal probe (small dental instrument) is gently used to measure the sulcus (pocket or

space) between the tooth and the gums. The depth of a healthy sulcus measures three millimeters or less and does not bleed. The periodontal probe helps indicate if pockets are deeper than three millimeters. As periodontal disease progresses, the pockets usually get deeper.

Your dentist or hygienist will use pocket depths, amount of bleeding, inflammation, tooth mobility, etc., to make a diagnosis that will fall into a category below:

Gingivitis

Gingivitis is the first stage of periodontal disease. Plaque and its toxin by-products irritate the gums, making them tender, inflamed, and likely to bleed.

Periodontitis

Plaque hardens into calculus (tartar). As calculus and plaque continue to build up, the gums begin to recede from the teeth. Deeper pockets form between the gums and teeth and become filled with bacteria and pus. The gums become very irritated, inflamed, and bleed easily. Slight to moderate bone loss may be present.

Advanced Periodontitis

The teeth lose more support as the gums, bone, and periodontal ligament continue to be destroyed. Unless treated, the affected teeth will become very loose and may be lost. Generalized moderate to severe bone loss may be present.

Professional Dental Cleaning:

At Dr. Harding's office your dental cleaning will be performed by one of our Registered Dental Hygienist. Along with an examination you will receive the following:

- **Removal of plaque:** Plaque is a sticky, almost invisible film that forms on the teeth. It is a growing colony of living bacteria, food debris, and saliva. The bacteria produce toxins (poisons) that inflame the gums. This inflammation is the start of periodontal disease!
- **Removal of calculus (tartar):** Calculus is hardened plaque that has been left on the tooth for sometime and is now firmly attached to the tooth surface. Calculus forms above and below the gum line, and can only be removed with special dental instruments.
- **Teeth polishing:** Remove stain and plaque that is not otherwise removed during tooth brushing and scaling.

Restorative Services:

Composite Fillings

A composite filling is a tooth colored restoration that is bonded to your existing tooth structure.

Reasons Dr. Harding may recommend a composite filling:

- Decayed teeth
- Fractured, cracked or broken teeth
- Chipped teeth
- Closing space between two teeth
- Worn teeth
- Replace an existing Amalgam (Silver Filling)

As with most dental restorations, composite fillings are not permanent and may someday need to be replaced. They are very durable, and will last many years.

Dr. Harding guarantees his dental fillings for 2 years as long as you abide by the recommended continuing care and examination schedule. Good oral hygiene practices, eating habits, and regular dental visits will aid in the life of your new fillings.

Crowns (Caps)

A crown (or cap) is a covering that encases the entire tooth surface restoring it to its original shape and size. A crown protects and strengthens tooth structure that cannot be restored with fillings or other types of restorations.

Reasons Dr. Harding may recommend a crown:

- Fractured, Cracked or Broken Teeth
- Cosmetic Enhancement
- Decayed Teeth
- Fractured Fillings
- Large Existing Fillings
- Tooth has a Root Canal

Dr. Harding works with the best dental laboratories around to provide you with high quality, highly functional and esthetically pleasing crowns (or caps). A typical custom crown (or cap) procedure will be completed in two appointments. The first one will require anesthetic while Dr. Harding prepares the tooth and takes an impression (or mold). The impression will be sent to a dental laboratory where it will be custom made to fit and look, exactly like your tooth. You will then return for a quick appointment to have the new crown (or cap) permanently cemented. This appointment generally does not require any dental anesthetic.

You will be given care instructions and encouraged to have regular dental visits to check your new crown. Although crowns (or caps) are permanently cemented they may require future

replacement or recementation due to normal wear.

Root Canal Therapy:

Root canal therapy is indicated when the nerve of a tooth is affected by decay or infection. In order to save the tooth, the pulp (the living tissue inside the tooth), nerves, bacteria, and any decay are removed and the resulting space is filled with special, medicated, dental materials, which restore the tooth to its full function.

Root canal treatment is highly successful and usually lasts a lifetime, although on occasion, a tooth will have to be retreated due to new infections.

Reasons Dr. Harding may recommend root canal therapy:

- Deep Decay that has reached the tooth pulp (the living tissue inside the tooth)
- Infection or abscess have developed inside the tooth or at the root tip. This may not be present with any signs or symptoms but will appear on a dental x-ray of the tooth root
- Injury or trauma to the tooth

Signs and symptoms root canal therapy may be indicated:

- An abscess (or pimple) on the gums
- Sensitivity to hot and cold
- Severe toothache pain or dull constant aching
- Swelling and/or tenderness

Regular dental examinations and early detection with dental x-rays can prevent the need for root canal therapy. If indicated Dr. Harding may recommend you see an endodontic specialist

who is more equipped to perform a complicated root canal therapy.