

New Patient Exam

The New Patient exam is a comprehensive oral examination that establishes a baseline. Indeed, the exam is also used as a means of patient education, so that you can make important decisions with regards to your dental needs. In order for us to do this, the examination is broken down into six sections, including prior dental history, periodontal (gums and bones), oral cancer exam, existing dental health, TMJ (jaw joint) exam, and a review of findings.

Prior dental history is a very important aspect of a patient's oral health. If x-rays are available from your previous dentist, they become part of your permanent dental record at our office, so that comparisons can be made with the new set of x-rays taken during the examination.

Review of Medical History and the Patient's Goals: One of the first things we will do is ask you about your most immediate concerns. Dr. Lyford will want to know what your goals are for your oral health in the short term as well as the long term. We will "map" all of your existing teeth and existing dentistry. Every surface of every tooth and existing restoration will be carefully evaluated and noted. It will be important to review your overall medical history including any medications, including herbal or homeopathic remedies you may be using. Many health problems relate and affect dental health. Indeed, a thorough exam of the mouth can reveal underlying systemic concerns. In the last twenty years Dr. Lyford has referred patients to their physicians for diagnoses such as high blood pressure, diabetes, thyroid disease, lymphoma, oral cancer, scleroderma, heart disease, and even pregnancy all based on a thorough examination.

Periodontal Exam: The foundation of a healthy mouth are the gums and the bone that support the teeth. We will carefully examine your mouth and chart gum recession, measure the gum attachment to each tooth, measure your plaque index, and look for signs of infection such as suppuration, swelling, redness, or bleeding. We will look for areas where there is food impaction and also look at the mobility or looseness of any teeth. Your radiographic examination will also help us to evaluate your periodontal condition.

Oral Cancer Exam: An oral cancer exam is part of the New Patient Examination. It only takes a few minutes, and as it is an extremely important element not only in the determination of the patient's current oral health but their overall physical health, Dr. Lyford performs this examination during the patient's regular visits with the hygienist. Oral cancer is one of the most readily treatable forms of cancer if it is diagnosed in a timely fashion. In the last twenty years, Dr. Lyford has diagnosed more than twenty cases of oral cancer in the course of his practice.

Existing Dentistry: A meticulous exam of all of your existing fillings, crowns, bridgework, dentures, and other dental materials and natural teeth will be performed. Magnification is used to be sure all fractures, cracked teeth, or any deterioration will not be

missed. Sometimes intraoral cameras will be used to record significant areas of concern. We will also evaluate the esthetics of your smile and color of your teeth. Again, careful recording of all aspects of your existing dentistry will be completed. Sometimes diagnostic models will be required to accurately and completely record significant findings.

TMJ Exam: A thorough examination of your temporomandibular joint (TMJ) health will include measuring your range of opening, listening to your jaw joint noises if any, charting wear facets on teeth, certain types of gum recession and tooth notching, and palpating the muscles that open and close your jaw. Headache history and any past head and neck trauma (like whiplash) may be important in a thorough TMJ exam. Measuring any discrepancies in your bite will be important to establish a baseline. Determining if the patient clenches or grinds at night is very important in evaluating your TMJ.

Review of Findings: You are most likely wondering, how will I understand all this? Yes, it may seem complicated at first, for the majority of the exam is done in dental terminology and entered into your permanent record on the computer. However, at a later date, you and Dr. Lyford will sit down and he will review all aspects of your oral health so that you are able to understand better your dental needs. Our goal is to work with a treatment plan that is comfortable for you, your family needs, and financial obligations.

Our office is committed to giving you the high quality dental care that you deserve, in a relaxed environment. That is precisely why the New Patient Examination is so important, as it allows us to become acquainted with you and formulate an educated treatment plan which addresses your specific dental needs.

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