What to Expect During your Visit to a Dental Provider

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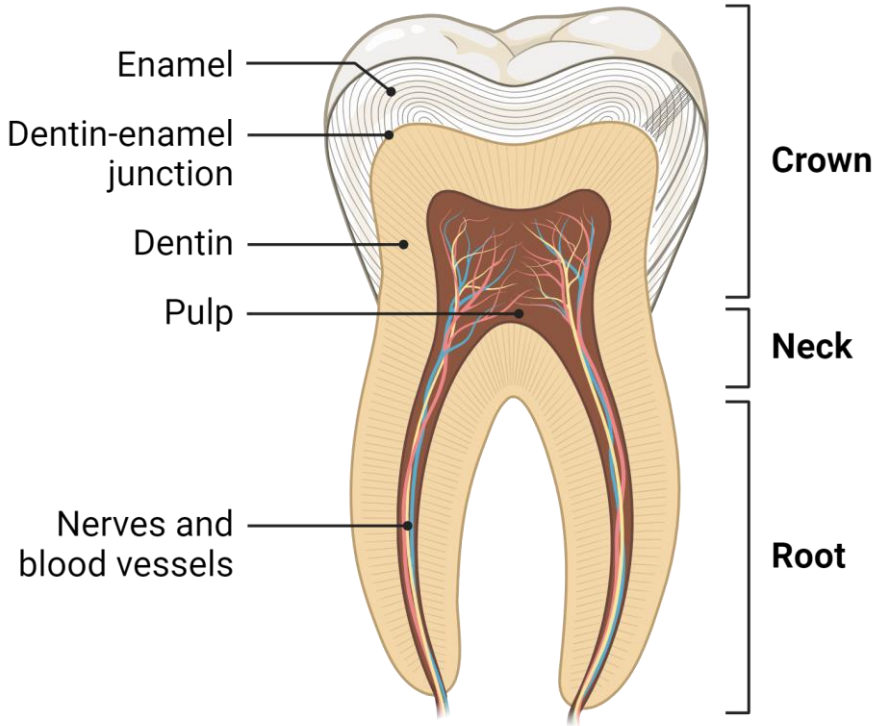
For Hennepin Health

Children's Dental Services

Why is dental health so important?

- Our teeth are necessary for eating, speaking, smiling, and more!
- They contain **nerves and blood vessels** that connect to the rest of our body
- Problems with our teeth have the ability to travel through these vessels and **affect the rest of our body**



Weerakoon, A. (2022). Tooth Anatomy. https://app.biorender.com/biorender-templates/figures/all/t-636d1c23be5ee0a7b22a1de9-tooth-anatomy

Why should we continue visiting a dental provider as we age?

- As we grow older, we become vulnerable to **developing medical issues**

Gum Disease
Likelihood increases after age 30
- Infection of the gum tissue
- Can lead to tooth loss

Dry Mouth
Likelihood increases dramatically by age 50
- Increases risk of cavities and bad breath
- Caused by many medications

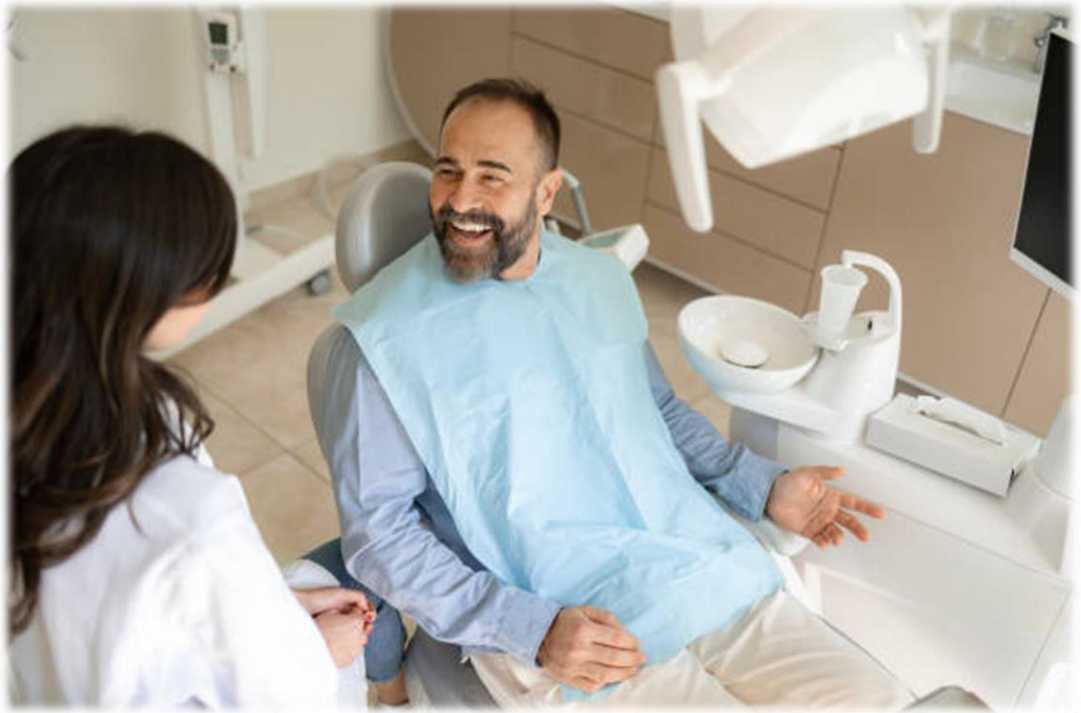
Oral Cancer
Likelihood increases after age 40.
- Linked to tobacco use
- Can be fatal if not caught in time

Poor Oral Hygiene
Difficulty brushing and flossing is linked to arthritis, which affects half of all Americans by age 65.
- Consider toothbrushes with modified handles and easy-to-use floss holders

https://www1.deltadentalins.com/wellness/healthy-aging/articles/aging-oral-health-risks.html

What should you expect at your dental exam?

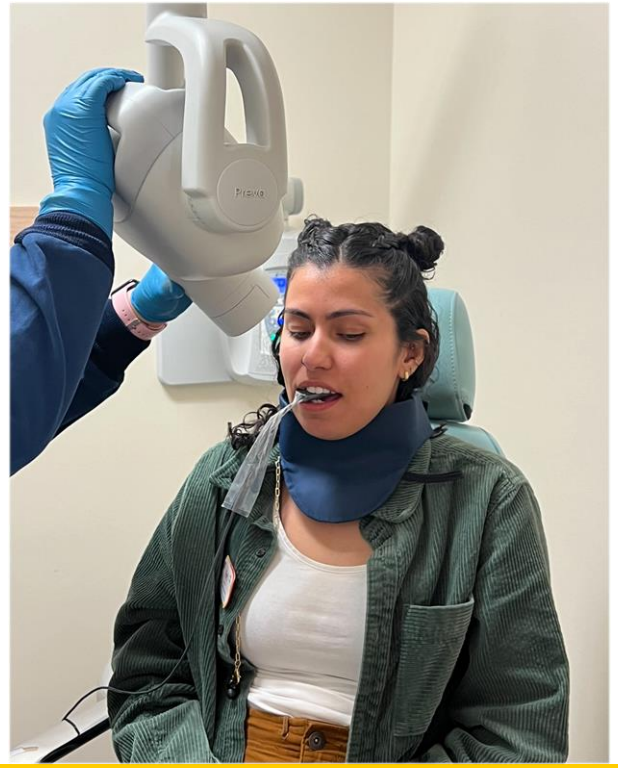
- Be prepared to review your medical history and discuss any:
  - Health conditions
  - Medications you are taking and sensitivity to medications
  - Allergies
  - Any other concerns

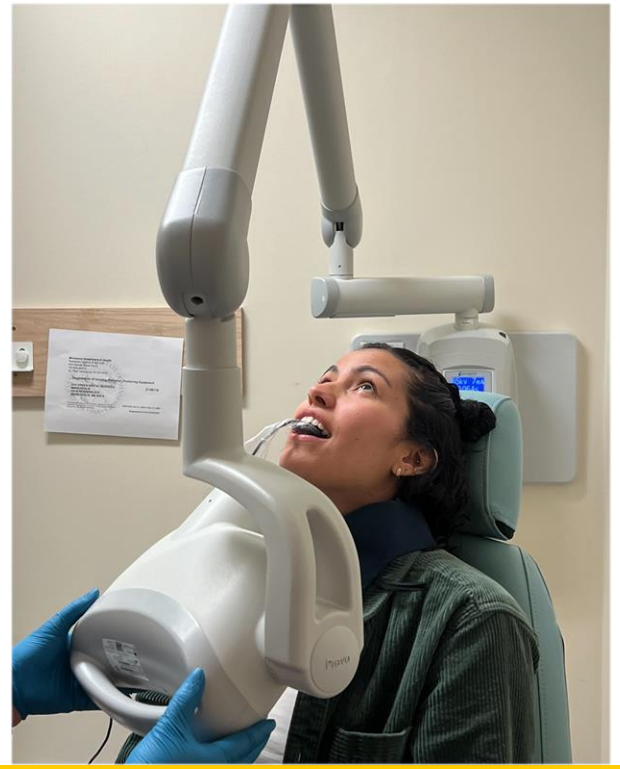


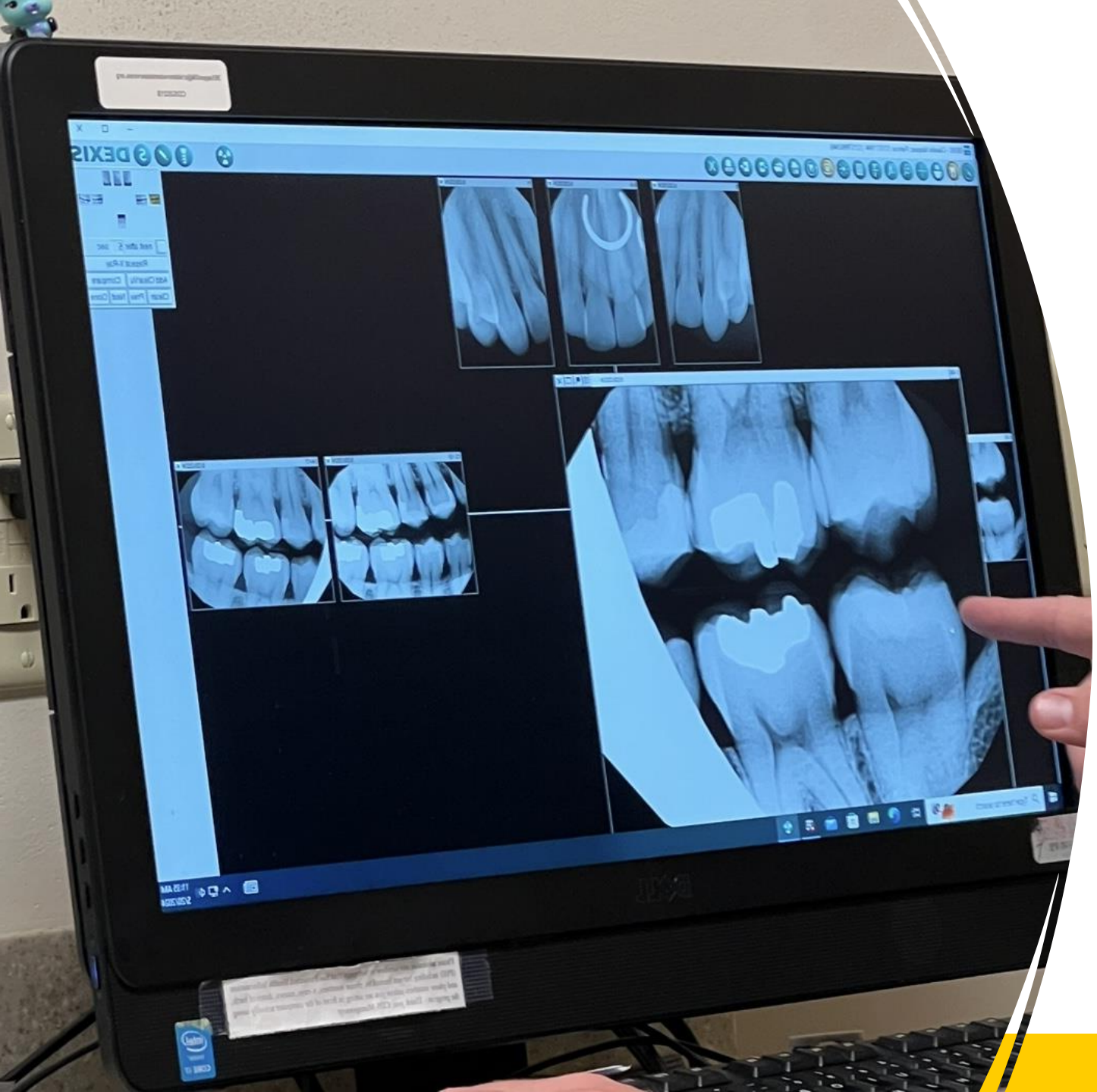
iStock/Getty Imags

You will have x-rays taken

- X-rays are internal pictures of your mouth and teeth. These can be taken at multiple angles.







X-rays can provide valuable information

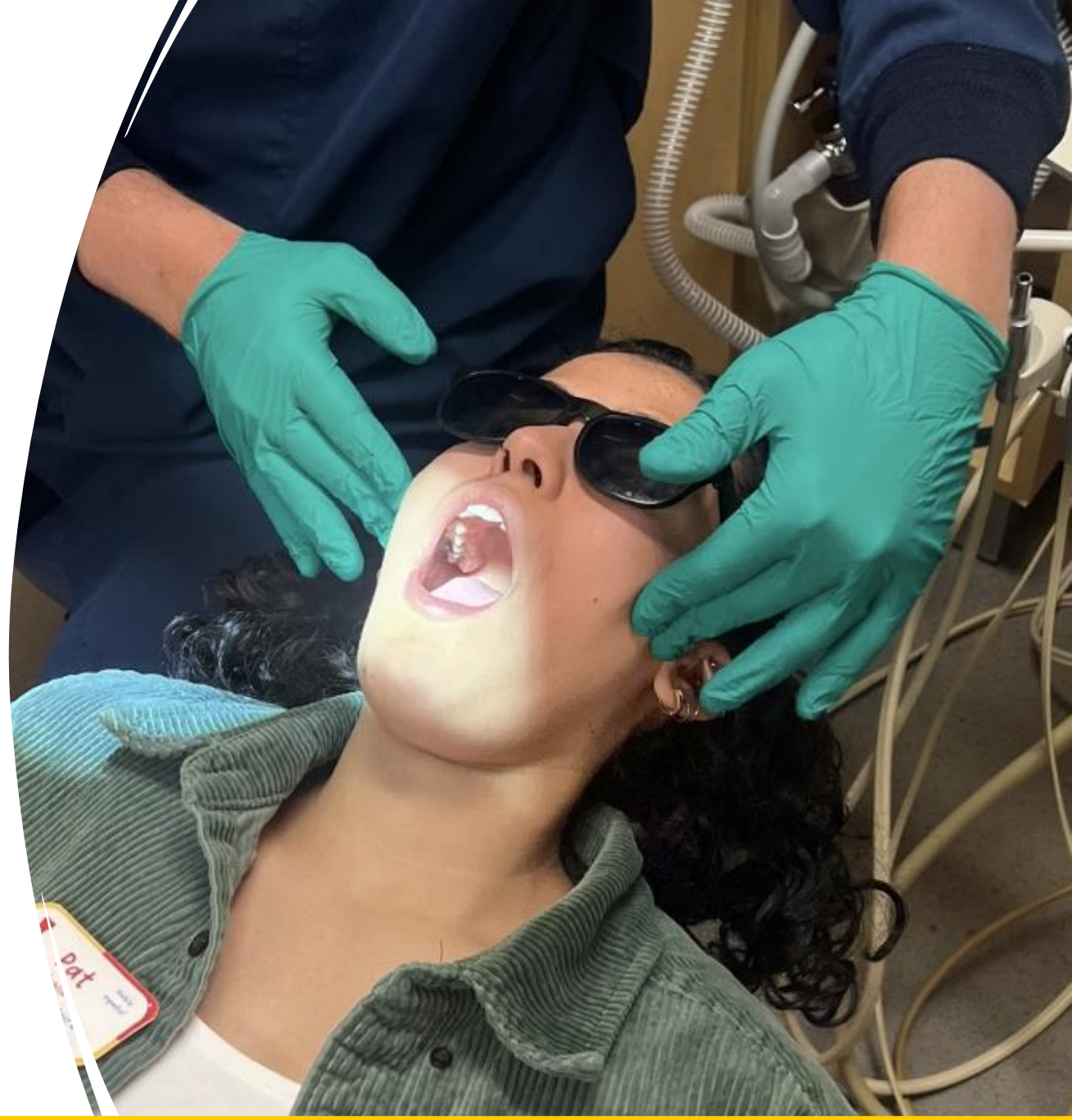
- Your teeth and their roots
- Jaw placement
- Your facial bones
- Presence or degree of gum disease
- Cavities
- Abnormal growths (like cysts & tumors)
- Location of impacted teeth
- Teeth not yet fully developed

You will also receive a visual examination

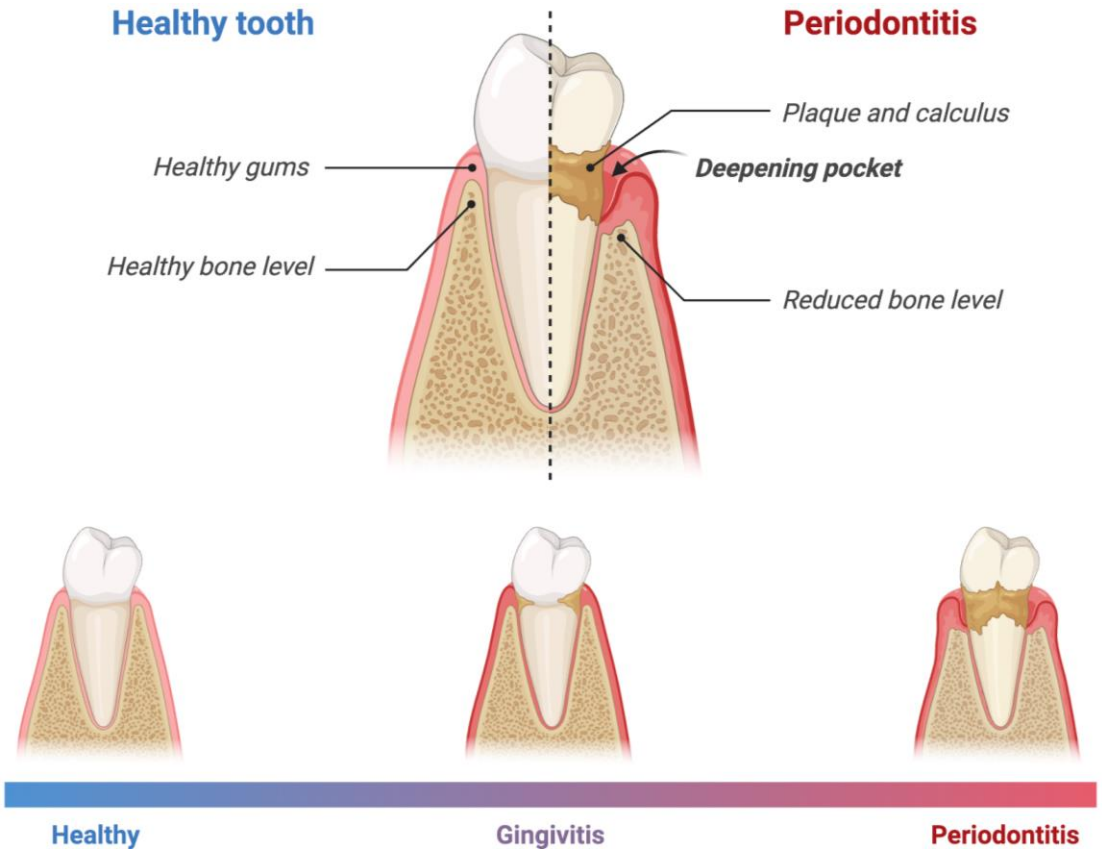
- Using small instruments and a mirror, your dental provider will be looking at :
  - The surfaces of your teeth
  - The health of your gums
  - Tooth alignment and signs of damage
  - Existing work, such as fillings or crowns

The dental provider will also evaluate other areas

- Examination of your head and neck, including lymph nodes
- Verification of any lumps or bumps on the tongue
- Assessment of mouth opening & closing for bite problems



Your gums are also important – they support your teeth!



Periodontal (gum) disease is an infection affecting many adults

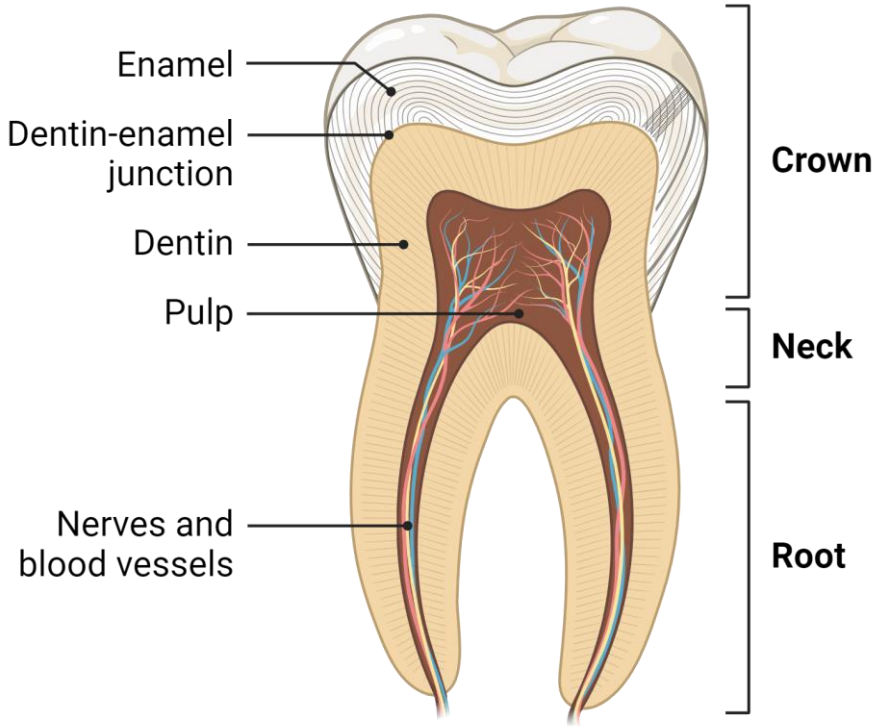
- Gingivitis - early stage
  - Symptoms include red, swollen gums and bleeding
  - Is reversible
- Periodontitis – late stage, very severe
  - The bacterial infection causes your gums and supporting teeth to break down
  - Is not reversible

BioRender (2019). Periodontitis Comparison.

Gum disease can affect many other parts of you

Treatment designed to your needs

- Standard or deep-cleaning
  - Scaling and Root Planing (SRP) is required for patients with gum disease
    - Insurance approval & anesthetic is needed
- Amalgam or resin fillings
- Referrals to adult clinics:
  - Root Canal Treatment (RCT)
  - Implants
  - Extractions
  - Dentures



It’s ok to be anxious!

- Dental anxiety is common – sometimes we can’t help it!
- If you are nervous, focus on your breathing. A focus on slow, regular breathing helps reduce stress levels.
- Communicate with your provider. You can let them know ahead of time if you are nervous, and you can agree on ways to communicate if you are feeling uncomfortable and need a break.
  - Hand signals work great!
- Remember that your dental provider is there to help you!

Although gum tenderness and other oral conditions may cause some sensitivity,

your entire exam should be pain-free!

Any questions?

Hennepin Health

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Children's Dental Services

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This presentation was made in collaboration between Children's Dental Services and Hennepin Health.