

# Co-Diagnosis

The diagnosis of periodontal disease and cavities, along with the evaluation of your bite, are important parts of a dental examination. We want you to understand how we diagnose oral health conditions so we can work together to maintain and improve your oral health.

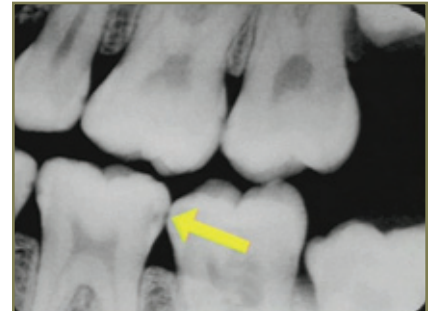
## How do we diagnose periodontal disease?

Since you may have no symptoms with periodontal disease, we perform a thorough examination with a periodontal probe and x-rays.

With periodontal disease, the bone level falls, and the gums pull away from the tooth, forming a pocket. We use a probe to take measurements from the bottom of the pocket where it's attached to the tooth, to the top of the gums. A probe reading of more than three millimeters is a sign of periodontal disease. In general, the deeper the pockets, the greater the spread of periodontal disease. Bleeding, which sometimes happens when we measure your gums, is also a sign of infection.



*Periodontal probing*



*Cavities show up as dark spots*

Healthy gums fit tight against the teeth. There aren't any pockets, and they don't bleed.

In early and moderate periodontal disease, the gums are red and swollen with infection, especially the gums between the teeth. This is where periodontal disease usually starts.

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

X-rays also show us tartar on the teeth. Finding tartar, which is hardened and mineralized plaque, is important because periodontal disease is caused by the accumulation of plaque.

## How do we diagnose cavities?

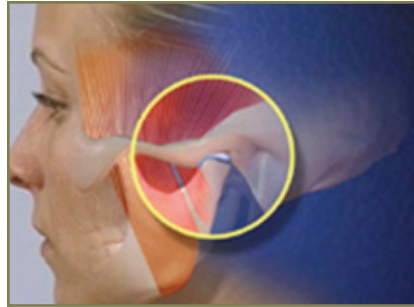
Like periodontal disease, cavities are caused by plaque. The bacteria in plaque produce acid, which destroys the enamel of your teeth and causes cavities.

Finding cavities is sometimes easy, but sometimes it's not. For hard-to-find cavities, we use a dental explorer and x-rays.

We check the tops and sides of your teeth with a dental explorer. To look for cavities between teeth, we use x-rays. Metal fillings and crowns show up as bright white, and cavities show up as dark spots.

It's far better to catch and restore cavities while they're still small and in the enamel layer of the tooth. Once they're in the softer dentin layer, they can grow quickly. If decay makes it to the pulp chamber, infection can grow inside the tooth and may lead to the need for root canal treatment.

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*The jaw joint*

### **How do we diagnose bite problems?**

During your checkup, we'll also inspect your bite. A healthy bite allows all of your teeth to hit simultaneously and evenly when your jaw joint is seated into its proper position at the base of your skull. In this position, your chewing muscles are also contracting evenly.

Bite problems can cause difficulties with your jaw joint, the TMJ. They can also cause bruxism, which is tooth grinding and clenching, and abfraction, which is the loss of tooth structure that forms notching near the gumline.

We want you to know how we diagnose periodontal disease and cavities and evaluate your bite because we believe it's important for you to be an active participant in diagnosis and treatment. We welcome your questions.