



Why You Don't Have to Feel Guilty About Skipping Your Dentist Appointment

By Karen Lac

Hate going to the dentist? There may be good news for you. A study conducted by the University of Michigan shows that once-a-year dental cleanings may be enough to prevent gum disease, provided that you don't have any risk factors.

The study, published in the June issue of the *Journal of Dental Research*, examined the dental claims of 5,117 adult patients with no previous history of periodontitis and who regularly went to the dentist for once or twice-a-year dental cleanings for 16 consecutive years. Periodontitis is an inflammatory infection that can lead to tooth loss if left untreated. The three key risk factors for periodontitis are smoking, a history of diabetes and genetics.

"Twice-yearly cleanings have been recommended for over 50 years without supporting evidence. Results showed that one yearly cleaning is likely to be enough for patients with no risk factors," Dr. William Giannobile, the Chair of the Department of Periodontics and Oral Medicine at the university's school of dentistry, said in a statement.

In fact, the percentage of patients without any risk factors that experienced tooth loss over the years was not any different whether they had gone for twice-a-year or once-a-year dental cleanings. In other words, going for that

second dental cleaning didn't reduce the incidence of periodontitis.

For those who had at least one of the risk factors, however, going for twice-a-year dental cleanings reduced the occurrence of periodontitis. Said Dr. Giannobile, "Patients with one or more risk factors, which represent over half of the population, should visit at least twice a year and likely more in some cases."

Find out the best products to keep your teeth bright and healthy!

Even if you don't have any risk factors for periodontitis, if you slack on oral hygiene at home, you shouldn't cancel your second cleaning. "If your gums are healthy and your oral hygiene program is good, then you may not need to have your teeth clean every six months, but just once a year may be enough," explains **Lana Rozenberg, DDS**, who has a private practice in New York City. "On the other hand, if your gums start to bleed after a few months after the cleaning and you collect more plaque and tartar, then you'll need to clean your teeth twice a year, or even sometimes more often. The actual frequency will depend on the severity of the gum irritation and infection and how effective you are in doing your part."