

**‘Investing For Health’ Workstream No. 11: Dentistry****Theme: ‘Quality in Dental Practice’****Tasks 1-3: “NICE into Practice” – recall intervals in dental practices.****ITEM No. 4 (of 5)****Sample Practice Information  
Sheet for Patients**

Informing patients of practice policy switch to NICE–based recall intervals

<i>Title of Document</i>	<b>Sample practice info sheet for patients: informing patients of practice policy switch to NICE–based recall intervals</b>
<i>Status</i>	<b>Developed through process of discussion at IFH11 “NICE Recalls” Task Group</b>
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## ***ANYTOWN DENTAL CARE: INFORMATION for PATIENTS***

**How often is your check-up is necessary? How our practice decides...**

### **INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

The time between one routine dental check-up and the next is called a *recall interval*. Once, most dentists felt we all needed check-ups every six months. This has changed.

It's a good idea to attend for regular dental check-ups, but *Anytown Dental Care* no longer sticks to a system of "*the same interval for all*".

Now, we'll suggest a *recall interval* based on your personal dental health. We will check your mouth, assess the likely risk of you needing dental treatment in the future; and based on this, we'll advise you to have your check-up at the interval we think is right for you. In summary:

- A. Dental and mouth health examination →**
- B. Assess how much 'risk' you may have →**
- C. Set dental recall interval (to max. 2 years)**

But this may vary from what you've been used to. For some patients, we will recommend an interval of six months, as before. Others will find they are invited to have their next check-up less often than before, for instance, once every 9 months, a year, or even up to two years. For children the longest interval is one year. By the way, this isn't to save money, or for the practice's benefit: we are following guidelines that are now considered 'best practice'.

*Q. So why is the practice using a new system?*

In 2004 a group of dental experts were asked to look again at the best way to set the timetable for dental check-ups. Their report was published by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence ('NICE') — so it was known as "*the NICE dental recall guidance*". The report said that science couldn't find any reason to stick to a fixed interval of six months for everyone. A single interval for all wasn't very scientific.

Mostly, dentists and dental experts feel the guidelines are right, and should be followed. And in any case, in 2006 the NHS made a rule that dental practices must follow NICE recall guidance. *Anytown Dental Care* now is now following these guidelines. By 2012 we hope that 90 percent of our patients will have had a personal recall interval set by the practice.

*/continued...*

*Q. How will the practice operate the system?*

If your recall interval hasn't been set already, we'll do this next time you begin a full course of dental treatment (emergency visits are not counted). When doing your check-up we'll examine your mouth and assess the 'risk' as lower, medium, or higher. Risk means how likely it is that you'll soon need another course of dental treatment.

If your level of risk is quite low, we'll probably advise that you need to return for check-ups just about every two years. If the risk is higher, the interval would be shorter. We may even recommend check-ups for some patients at shorter intervals than six months. For children we will use a similar system, but no-one under 19 will have an interval longer than twelve months.

Our advice on your personal interval will be reviewed every so often. Over time, the recommendation may change — in either direction.

*Q. What sorts of things affect the risk?*

The NICE recall guidelines say we should take into account a number of things ...

- How much tooth decay or dental repairs you've already had; and what we know about your diet (whether it is likely to increase your decay risk).
- The condition of your gums and whether your tooth-brushing is successfully keeping your gums healthy.
- Other things such as age, medical condition, and tobacco or alcohol use.

*Q. How will I be given this information?*

We want you to understand the process and our advice. At the end of your check-up assessment your dentist will advise you on the interval we think is best for you. We will explain the things that affected your assessment and you can ask us questions. Once you are happy, we will help you plan for your next check-up in line with the interval we have agreed.

*Q. What if I want to have check-ups more often than recommended?*

Your views are important to us. We hope you will be pleased with our advice on recall intervals. If you are not happy or there is something you don't understand about your recall interval, please discuss it with us. We can usually agree but we know some patients prefer more frequent check-ups than we'd normally advise.

The practice has to follow NHS rules which ask us to provide only the dental care that is necessary and not to do work more frequently than needed. If you feel you want more frequent check-ups than advised, you may wish to consider this as an extra option paid for privately. We will be happy to discuss this with you.

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