

WHAT IS A PROPHYLAXIS?

A prophylaxis is also called a cleaning. It is scaling and polishing of the crowns of the teeth to remove plaque, tartar (calculus), and stains.

HOW OFTEN DO I NEED TO HAVE MY TEETH CLEANED?

The old system of everyone having their teeth cleaned only twice a year has fallen out of favour. In fact, many believe that the idea actually came from the recommendations of a 1940s toothpaste advertisement!

While some people may be able to maintain their dental health with semi-annual cleanings, many patients find that their mouth and teeth stay in better shape when they have their teeth cleaned more frequently. Many dentists and hygienists are now setting up a patient's cleaning schedule based on their own personal needs. This may be as often as four times per year.

A CRITICAL ELEMENT IN ESTABLISHING PERIODONTAL HEALTH

The aforementioned procedures are used as a complete treatment in some stages of periodontal disease, and as part of preparing the mouth for surgery in others. Several appointments, treating sections of the mouth, and local anesthesia or intravenous sedation may be required. Scaling the root surface is a critical element in establishing periodontal health. In addition, recent studies are beginning to show a relationship between gum and bone health and certain heart conditions and other systemic diseases.

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**IMPRESSIONS
DENTAL CENTRES**

SCALING VS. ROOT PLANING

Your Patient Guide



DID YOU KNOW?

As in many other chronic conditions, successful long-term control of the disease and prevention of tooth loss depends on continual, and possibly life-time maintenance.



**IMPRESSIONS
DENTAL CENTRES**

WHAT IS A REGULAR OR STANDARD CLEANING?

A regular cleaning is known as a prophylaxis in dental terms. The American Dental Association describes a prophylaxis as scaling and polishing procedures to remove coronal plaque, calculus and stains.



SCALING

Scaling means to use a dental instrument to scrape away deposits from the teeth. An electric device, called an ultra-sonic or sonic scaler, may also be used. This scaling is performed on the part of the tooth that is exposed above the gum line - in other words, on the coronal or crown of the tooth.



CALCULUS

Calculus, also known as tartar is a hard, mineralized deposit, somewhat like cement, that is formed from the plaque in the mouth and the minerals in a person's saliva.



PLAQUE

Plaque is a soft, sticky substance that forms on teeth, regardless of what types of food are eaten, which is composed of bacteria and bacterial by-products. A regular cleaning is recommended for persons who do not have any bone loss, periodontal disease, or infection around their teeth. There should also be no bleeding, mobility of teeth, receded areas where the gums have pulled away from the teeth, or gaps where the spaces around the teeth are exposed. In other words, the mouth should be healthy with no gum or bone problems.

WHAT IS A ROOT PLANING PROCEDURE?

Root planing is typically one of the first steps in treating gum and bone disease (periodontal disease). Root planing removes the bacteria and their toxins, tartar and diseased deposits from the surfaces of tooth roots. Scaling may be required the full length of the root surface, down to where the root, gum and bone meet. Periodontal disease is very common, but does not always have distinct symptoms. It is an inflammation and infection of the supporting structures of the teeth (gums, bone, ligaments, root surfaces) that eventually results in the loss of teeth. You may notice that your gums bleed easily, that you have a bad taste in your mouth, that your gums appear red or swollen, that your teeth appear longer or have shifted - or you may not notice anything at all.

WHAT IS PERIODONTAL MAINTENANCE?

If you have periodontal disease, you may require root planing to remove diseased deposits from the roots of your teeth. Other treatments, including surgery, may be required. After the disease process is under control, a regular cleaning is not appropriate anymore. Instead, you will require special ongoing gum and bone care procedures, also known as periodontal maintenance, to keep your mouth healthy. The American Dental Association describes periodontal maintenance as a procedure for patients who have previously been treated for periodontal disease which continues at varying intervals, determined by the clinical diagnosis of the dentist, for the life of the teeth. It also includes the removal of deposits or bacteria found below the gumline as well as diseased cementum, or dentin found at the root surfaces, both above and below the gumline.

PERIODONTAL MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES MAY INCLUDE:

- ❖ AN UPDATE OF YOUR DENTAL HISTORY AND AN X-RAY REVIEW
- ❖ MOUTH/FACE EXAM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE INCLUDING CHEEKS, LIPS, TONGUE, GUMS AND THROAT
- ❖ TOOTH EXAMINATION (BY THE DENTIST)
- ❖ GUM AND BONE EXAMINATION
- ❖ REVIEW OF HOME CARE
- ❖ SCALING AND ROOT PLANING, AS NEEDED
- ❖ POLISHING OF TEETH, AS NEEDED
- ❖ GUMS AND POCKET IRRIGATION WITH MEDICINE, AS NEEDED

Typically, an interval of three months between appointments is effective, but more frequent appointments may be needed. As in many other chronic conditions, successful long-term control of the disease and prevention of tooth loss depends on continual, and possibly life-time maintenance.



KEEPING YOUR TEETH LOOKING THEIR BEST IS ALSO SOMETHING YOU CAN DO AT HOME!