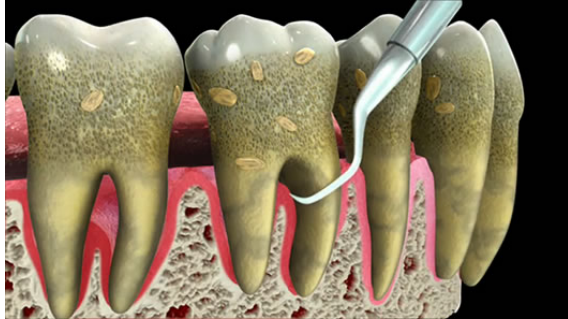


Scaling & Root Planing (Deep Cleaning)



Scaling and root planing is frequently referred to as 'deep cleaning'. Deep cleaning is the treatment of choice for an infectious disease called periodontal disease.

What Is Periodontal Disease?

Periodontal disease mainly starts with the formation of plaque around the teeth. Plaque is the yellow film on your teeth caused by food and bacteria in your mouth. When plaque build-up mixes with the saliva, it hardens over time and turns into tartar. Tartar containing bacteria will irritate the gums around the teeth by attaching to the outer surface of the teeth and roots and releases poisonous toxins. These toxins cause an infection and an inflammation of the gums. Worse, if left untreated they can ultimately cause bone loss and eventually tooth loss. Keep in mind the lost bone will never grow back.

Fortunately, scaling and root planing can help. Scaling and root planing is a procedure that treats the infected area by meticulously cleaning the tartar and bacteria from the teeth and their roots.

Detecting Periodontal Disease

One way to diagnose periodontal disease is by taking dental x-rays. X-ray images assist in

making the tartar build up under the gums more visible. X-rays also show the current condition of the bone.

The second method of diagnosis is a clinical examination in which your dentist can visually check the amount of plaque and tartar build up as well as the color and shape of the gums as indicators for gum disease.

The third and last method of diagnosis is by measuring the pockets that form between the gums and teeth. Destructive bacteria contained in plaque and tartar cause the formation of these pockets. Any pocket that measures greater than 3mm is probably an indication of periodontal disease.

Scaling & Root Planing Treatment

Deep cleaning, or scaling and root planing is normally performed by your dentist or dental hygienist in a couple of visits. The exact number of visits however depends on your dentist and the amount of tartar build up. Often your dentist will choose to administer local anesthetic to make the procedure virtually painless. The goal of the procedure is to eliminate the infection by removing the bacteria containing plaque and tartar that has attached to your teeth and their roots under the gum.

The deep cleaning is either done manually or with an ultra-sonic instrument called a cavitron, or sometimes a combination of the two. Both techniques loosen and remove plaque and tartar build up.

In addition, antibacterial irritants or local antibiotics such as Arestin may be used in conjunction with the cleaning procedure to further reduce the number of bacteria around the gums.

Can You Get A Regular Cleaning Instead?

The answer is NO. As the name deep cleaning implies, the main difference is that scaling and root planning goes below the gum to remove plaque or tarter build up from the tooth's root where the bone is affected by the infection, whereas, regular cleaning only removes the plaque or tarter above the gum.

Periodontal Follow-up Care

Periodontal disease cannot currently be cured; it can only be controlled, so it is important to follow your dentist's recommendations for follow-up maintenance and treatment. In addition to routine check-ups, performing proper dental hygiene at home is of course also important to help prevent the reoccurrence of this destructive disease.