

PERIODONTAL SCALING & ROOT PLANNING

The objective of scaling & root planning is to remove etiologic agents which cause inflammation to the gingival tissue and surrounding bone.

Common etiologic agents removed by this conventional periodontal therapy include dental plaque and tartar (calculus). These non-surgical procedures which completely cleanse the periodontium, work very effectively for individuals suffering from gingivitis and moderate/severe periodontal disease.

Reasons for Scaling and Root Planning

Scaling can be used both as a preventative measure and as a stand-alone treatment. These procedures are performed as a preventative measure for a periodontitis sufferer.

Here are some reasons why these dental procedures may be necessary:

- **Disease prevention** – The oral bacteria which cause periodontal infections can travel via the bloodstream to other parts of the body. Research has shown that lung infections and heart disease have been linked to periodontal bacteria.
- **Tooth protection** – When gum pockets exceed 3 mm in depth, there is a greater risk of periodontal disease. As pockets deepen, they tend to house more colonies of dangerous bacteria. Eventually, a chronic inflammatory response by the body begins to destroy gingival and bone tissue which may lead to tooth loss.
- **Aesthetic effects** – Scaling and Root Planning help remove tartar and plaque from the teeth and below the gum line. As an added bonus, if superficial stains are present on the teeth, they will be removed in the process of the scaling and root planning procedure.

- **Better breath** – One of the most common signs of periodontal disease is halitosis (bad breath). Food particles and bacteria can cause a persistent bad odor in the oral cavity which is alleviated with cleaning procedures such as scaling and root planning.

What do Scaling and Root Planning treatments involve?

The dentist will take X-rays, conduct visual examinations and make a diagnosis before recommending or beginning these procedures.

Depending on the current condition of the gums, the amount of calculus (tartar) present, the depth of the pockets and the progression of the periodontitis, local anesthetic may be used.

Scaling – This procedure is usually performed with an ultrasonic scaling tool. The scaling tool removes calculus and plaque from the surface of the crown and root surfaces. The scaling tool includes an irrigation process that can also be used to deliver an antimicrobial agent below the gums that can help reduce oral bacteria.

Root Planing – This procedure is a specific treatment which serves to remove cementum and surface dentin that is embedded with unwanted microorganisms, toxins and tartar. The root of the tooth is literally smoothed in order to promote good healing. Having clean, smooth root surfaces helps bacteria from easily colonizing in future.

Following deep cleaning procedures, the gum pockets may be treated with antibiotics. This will soothe irritation and help the gum tissues to heal quickly.

During the next appointment, the dentist or hygienist will thoroughly examine the gums again to see how well the pockets have healed.