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What is Scaling and Root Planing?

SCALING AND ROOT PLANING



Scaling removes plaque and tartar from below the gumline.



Root planing smooths the tooth root and helps the gums reattach to the tooth.

Why Do I Need It?

Scaling and root planing is a deep cleaning below the gumline used to treat gum disease.

Gum disease is caused by a sticky film of bacteria called plaque. Plaque is always forming on your teeth, but if they aren't cleaned well, the bacteria in plaque can cause your gums to become inflamed. When this happens, your gums will pull away from your teeth and form spaces called pockets. Plaque then gets trapped in these pockets and cannot be removed with regular brushing. If untreated, gum disease could lead to bone and tooth loss.

If gum disease is caught early and hasn't damaged the structures below the gum line, a professional cleaning is advised. If the pockets between your gums and teeth are too deep, however, scaling and root planing may be needed.



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What Happens During Scaling and Root Planing?

This deep cleaning has two parts. Scaling is when your hygienist removes all the plaque and tartar (hardened plaque) above and below the gumline, making sure to clean all the way down to the bottom of the pocket. Your dentist will then begin root planing, making sure all of the root surfaces are clean to help your gums reattach to your teeth. Scaling and root planing may take more than one visit to complete and may require a local anesthetic.

After Care Tips

After a deep cleaning, you may have pain for a day or two and teeth sensitivity for up to a week. Your gums also may be swollen, feel tender and bleed.

To prevent infection, control pain or help you heal, your dentist may prescribe a pill or mouth rinse. Your dentist may also insert medication (subantimicrobial-dose doxycycline) directly into the pocket that was cleaned.

Your dentist will schedule another visit to see how your gums have healed and measure the depth of your pockets. If they have gotten deeper, more treatment may be needed.

Good dental care at home is essential to help keep gum disease from becoming more serious or recurring. [Brush your teeth twice a day](#) with a soft brush, [clean between your teeth daily](#), [eat a balanced diet](#), [avoid using tobacco](#) and [see your dentist regularly](#).