

SCALING and ROOT PLANING

The Procedure

Scaling is a periodontal dental procedure in which plaque and calculus are removed from the tooth both above (supragingival) and below (subgingival) the gum (gingiva). *Root planing* is a procedure in which diseased or altered portions of the root surface, the cementum, and dentin are removed and the resulting new surface is made smooth and clean. The more altered and damaged the root surface has been from calculus (tartar) accumulation, the more the need for root planing.

The purpose of scaling and root planing is to remove all debris from the teeth. Any item that can cause inflammation of the gum tissue must be eliminated. The root surface must be made as smooth as possible. Irregularities in the root surface can contribute to gum inflammation. Irregularities are sites for bacteria and plaque buildup. The bacteria and the toxins they produce in the plaque are held against the tooth by the calculus. In this way, plaque and calculus on the teeth have been positively linked to gum disease.

Depending on the severity of your particular periodontal problem, scaling and root planing may be the definitive treatment and no further procedures will be required. In many cases scaling and root planing are only a necessary part of the overall therapy. It is a demanding procedure. It requires much more time than the familiar adult prophylaxis (cleaning). It is usually done in multiple appointments, treating a quarter, half mouth, or your full mouth at each appointment. In this office we find that most patients are most comfortable if the area to be treated during the root planing procedure is anesthetized with a local anesthetic.

The scaling and root planing may have to be repeated in the future. It is customary to place the patient on a 3 to 4 month hygiene recare schedule. Scientific evidence clearly shows that for individuals who have demonstrated a predisposition to periodontal disease, an interval of 6 months is too long. We are familiar with your particular periodontal situation and will determine the appropriate interval for you. As your situation changes, there may be changes in the length of these intervals as well.

Other than the teeth being somewhat sensitive after the scaling and root planing procedure, there is little postoperative discomfort. The sensitivity will diminish with time. If you have been diagnosed as having severe periodontal infection, the sensitivity may remain for quite some time and further procedures may be needed to eliminate sensitivity. Although many procedures in dentistry can be considered elective, we consider scaling and root planing to be a necessity for your dental health.

Preventing Recurrence

Once scaling and root planing has been completed, it is most important for you to practice the brushing and flossing techniques in which you will be instructed. If we have recommended any additional periodontal aids, you must use them too. Your cooperation is vital if the procedures are to be successful. To remain disease-free, you will need to remain constant in your oral self-care regimen.

If have any questions about scaling and root planing, please feel free to ask us.