

# SCALING AND ROOT PLANING

## What is periodontal disease?

Periodontal disease can be described as an inflammation and/or infection of the gums and bone that support the teeth. Bacterial plaque, and its toxic by-products, plus calculus and roughened root surfaces can overwhelm the mouth's defenses. Typically, unhealthy gum tissue covers eroded bone, resulting in abnormal *pockets* around the roots. 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. Left untreated, periodontal disease can result in loss of teeth.

## What is a root planing procedure?

*Root planing* removes bacteria and their toxins, tartar, and diseased deposits from the surfaces of tooth roots. Scaling is required for the full length of the root surface, down to where the root, gum and bone meet. Root planing is typically one of the first steps in treating gum and bone disease (periodontal disease).

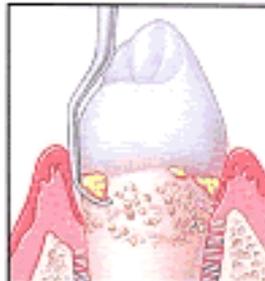
Scaling and root planing is a therapeutic (healing), meticulous, and time consuming treatment designed to remove toxins and bacteria from the root surfaces of the teeth, thereby allowing the body's immune system to begin the healing process. Calculus (tartar), and diseased dentin are scaled away. These procedures are used as a complete treatment in some stages of periodontal disease. Several appointments, treating sections of the mouth at a time, and using local anesthesia may be required. These procedures are considered critical in establishing periodontal health. Recent studies are even beginning to show a relationship between gum and bone health in certain heart conditions and other systemic diseases.

## What happens after scaling and root planing?

After you have finished your scaling and root planing, *regular* cleanings are no longer effective. The American Dental Association refers to post-scaling and root planing cleanings as *periodontal maintenance*. These periodontal maintenance visits are not considered *regular* cleanings due to the nature of disease control. The bacteria causing periodontal disease re-establishes itself in as little as 90 days and it is critical to disrupt this process in order to disable the destructive process. There is no cure for periodontal disease, it can only be managed or controlled. The successful long-term control of periodontal disease depends upon active and continuous maintenance therapy.

### Scaling

Scaling is a type of cleaning. It removes plaque and tartar from around and below the gum line.



### Root Planing

Root planing involves scraping and smoothing the root surfaces of your teeth. Gum tissue can more firmly reattach to roots that are clean and smooth.

