

Treatment of Periodontal Disease: Scaling and Root Planing

PERIODONTAL (GUM) DISEASE is often a painless condition, but may exhibit swollen and bleeding gums. Bacteria (often referred to as plaque or biofilm) and deposits of calculus (tartar) are usually found attached deep under the gum tissue on the tooth's root surface. The bacteria cause a chronic infection called Periodontal Disease, which may lead to permanent bone loss (deep pockets) and eventual tooth loss.

Scaling and Root Planing is often an initial treatment to help control the progression of Periodontal Disease. This treatment involves removing bacteria and calculus deposits deep within the pockets so the tissues can become healthy.

To minimize discomfort during the Scaling and Root Planing treatment, local anesthetic is usually administered. Following Scaling and Root Planing some minor discomfort and swelling may occur. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) are usually helpful. Rinsing with warm salt water ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt per glass of warm water) may also assist in relieving discomfort and aid in the healing process. Temporary sensitivity to cold after Scaling and Root Planing is considered normal.

Complete daily removal of bacteria (plaque) at home by brushing and flossing is important to avoid further infection and calculus build up.

Your periodontal health will be re-evaluated at the next appointment, called *Periodontal Maintenance*. At that time an assessment will be made of the remaining pocket depths, bone loss, and the effectiveness of your daily home care. Recommendations will be given for ongoing maintenance visits or additional treatment that might be needed for your periodontal health. In advanced cases further treatment may involve seeing a specialist called a Periodontist.