

A Lifetime of Healthy Teeth and Gums



The dental profession refers to the dental cleaning appointment as a dental prophylaxis, or prophyl. Its most significant functions are prevention of dental disease and patient education. It is likely the most important and valuable visit a patient may ever make to the dentist.

The routine dental cleaning is anything but routine, and should include:

- Personal oral hygiene evaluation, home care review and recommendations.
- Tooth brushing and flossing instructions.
- Supra gingival (above the gum) scaling to remove plaque and tartar from all visible tooth surfaces.
- Debridement of tartar beneath the gum, as conditions warrant.
- Topical fluoride treatment to the age of thirteen.
- Polishing the teeth.
- Nutrition assessment, if needed
- Periodontal charting, and scheduling of additional periodontal care as indicated.
- The dental prophylaxis is the cornerstone for a lifetime of dental health.
- Ultrasonic and Hand Scaling

Plaque is the colonization of natural oral bacteria on food debris that remains on the surface and in the crevices of the teeth and gums. Combining with minerals in the saliva, it ultimately forms a hard, rough sediment known as dental tartar or calculus which attracts further plaque buildup. Calculus must be removed by a dental professional for the prevention of periodontal disease.

Removal of calculus may be performed by a licensed dental hygienist or dentist, either by manual scaling of the teeth, or with an ultrasonic device. The choice of technique is a personal preference by the hygienist or wishes of the patient. Most states permit trained dental hygienists to administer local anesthetic and nitrous oxide (laughing gas), often necessary for deep periodontal scaling and root planing.

Light or moderate tartar buildup is commonly removed by manual scaling instruments of various shapes and sizes. The skills of the hygienist are especially important for this procedure.

The ultrasonic scaler, commonly called by the brand name, Cavitron, is often indicated for the efficient removal of heavy, tenacious tartar and stain. The hygienist may follow its use with hand scaling for a more finite smoothing of tooth and root surfaces.

Polishing

The dental prophylaxis is refined by a final polishing of the teeth to remove stain and create a sensation of fresh breath and a clean mouth. It may be accomplished by spraying high pressured water mixed with baking soda paste onto the surface of the teeth (prophy jet polishing), or a rubber cup and polishing paste. Many states permit a certified dental assistant to polish teeth with a rubber cup and to apply fluoride for children.

The Dental Recall Appointment

Patients should schedule their recall appointments on a regular basis for the early diagnoses of dental disease. The hygienist or dentist may recommend a prophylaxis visit every two to six months. Even if your dental insurance plan only covers the procedure twice a year, it's money well spent. Recall frequency depends on many factors and should be determined on an individual basis. Some people tend to have more buildup of calculus than others and some may be more prone to periodontal inflammation or the development of tooth decay. Patients with inadequate oral hygiene practices will require more frequent cleanings.

Healthy Tips



An extremely important part of any fitness program is being able to measure your progress. Body fat testing is not painful, nor is it expensive. You can get it done at most any gym or fitness center. Simply ask if they have an expert who can measure body composition. It's also a good idea to take before and after photos and post them somewhere you'll see them every day.