

Scaling and Root Planing

Scaling and root planing is typically the first treatment completed when patients have developed periodontal disease. In some advanced cases, if scaling and root planing does not provide adequate resolution of the diseased area, additional surgical treatment will be required. Scaling and root planing is both therapeutic and diagnostic as it will help reduce periodontal pocketing, bleeding and overall inflammation. Areas that are not responsive to this therapy typically are harboring more aggressive types of bacteria or have anatomical abnormalities that are contributing towards the continued problem; both requiring additional surgical intervention.

Scaling and root planing is a very detailed cleaning. We are cleaning 360 degrees around the teeth extending to the full depths of the pocket. During the scaling and root planing appointment we are removing the hardened bacterial accumulation (calculus) on the root surface, smoothing the root surface, and in some cases removing the disease tissue lining of the pocket (granulation tissue). Treatment is completed utilizing specialized ultrasonic instruments, manual hand instruments, polishing, flossing and the application of a fluoride varnish. Treatment is often completed in half mouth appointments (upper right with lower right and upper left with lower left) and can take anywhere from one 1.5 to 3 hours depending on case severity (average is 2 hours). The hygienist or periodontist may also elect to complete additional treatments to help improve the overall clinical results of treatment. This may include antibiotic therapy, laser pocket disinfection or pocket debridement utilizing an air polisher. Local anesthetic will be administered to numb the area scheduled for treatment. This will help keep you comfortable for the duration of your appointment and allow the hygienist to do a thorough job. It can take several injections to completely numb the area's being treated. Local anesthetic can last up to 3 to 4 hours.

Each hygienist has their own order to which they like to complete treatment. In general, these procedures are completed during this treatment:

Ultrasonic instrumentation	A specialized tip is used which circulates at high speeds to help break up hardened calculus (tartar). The specialized tip caused bubbles to form and burst, breaking the cell wall of bacteria and helping to kill them.
Hand instrumentation	Multiple hand instruments, each with their own unique purpose, are used to remove the remaining calculus (tartar), smooth and polish the root surface reducing the rate at which soft plaque can build back on the surface.
Polish	A polisher will be used to smooth the enamel of the tooth, remove superficial plaque and clean the edge of the gum tissue.
Flossing	Flossing helps clear the tight contacts between the teeth from plaque and food debris.
Fluoride varnish	A fluoride varnish is applied to help strengthen and re-mineralize the root and enamel of the tooth. It also helps reduce the amount of post-operative sensitivity which can develop from the newly cleaned root surface.