

# THE DENTAL INSTITUTE

*Excellence in General, Cosmetic & Implant Dentistry*

## Scaling and Root Planing

If plaque and tartar is left on the teeth, it is the right conditions for bacteria to thrive. The bacteria irritate the gums, which means that they bleed more easily. You may notice this if you are brushing your teeth, or eating, and sometimes your gums may bleed a bit. This is the early stage of gum disease called *gingivitis*. If you have gingivitis, one of Dr. Lanza's hygienist will clean your teeth by scaling and polishing them. They may also recommend an antiseptic mouthwash containing chlorhexidine and show you how to brush and floss your teeth effectively. Most adults have some degree of gum disease. To stop gum disease from progressing, Dr. Lanza may advise periodontal therapy, or deep cleaning. This gets rid of the bacteria in the pocket and provides the necessary conditions for healing to occur.

### What is the difference between an ordinary cleaning and deep cleaning?

There is some confusion about the difference between scaling and root planing. Scaling is basically the process of removing dental tartar from the surfaces of the teeth. Root planing is the process of smoothing the root surfaces and removing any infected tooth structure. If you have gum disease or gum pocketing, the gum pockets around the teeth will have deepened, thereby allowing tartar deposits to form under the gumline.

The two processes tend to blur together since during the cleaning process, the hygienist scales away tartar and performs any necessary root planing at the same time. Any roughness can be planed away to result in a silky smooth surface.

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## What can I expect afterwards?

- Discomfort can vary after root planing, but one can expect it to be more sore afterwards since it's usually in a deeper region under the gums.
- The teeth themselves can become a bit more sensitive to temperature, and bleeding might occur for a little while.
- Over-the-counter painkillers such as ibuprofen work very well to alleviate discomfort, but stronger painkillers can be given should you need them.
- Brushing and flossing can be delayed or done more gently to avoid aggravating any bruised or tender gum areas.
- Dr. Lanza or the hygienist may recommend salt water or chlorhexidine rinses.