

## What Should I Know After Scaling / Root Planning

### 1. *What exactly is “scaling and root planning?”*

The procedures scaling and root planning are non-surgical, conservative approaches to treating gum disease. Scaling is the procedure typically performed above the gum line that removes harmful bacteria (plaque), as well as tartar (calculus) on the crown of the tooth. Root planning is an extension of routine scaling that is done to the teeth but treats the root surface below the gum line. Root planning effectively cleans the pocket areas around a tooth. Inflammation forms in the pocket areas and can vary from mild to advance.

### 2. *Will I experience discomfort during or after scaling/root planning?*

It is not unusual for the gums and teeth to be tender after scaling/root planning. The gums are manipulated during the procedure. It is strongly suggested to take some analgesics (such as Advil) prior to the appointment and then 3-4 hour intervals after treatment. Rinse with a saline solution (8oz. of warm water + ½ tsp. salt) after every meal for the next 2-3 days.

### 3. *What types of changes can I expect in my mouth?*

The gums should start to heal and shrink over 7-10 days. When pockets exist, the amount of inflammation can be very significant. It is a positive sign to get shrinkage, however, larger spaces will be created between the teeth and the teeth may appear “longer”. A healthy color for gum tissue should be light pink, not red. The consistency of the gums should be firm and not “spongy”. To encourage maximum shrinkage, warm up your toothbrush bristles and apply direct pressure to the gums. Envision brushing the gums and sweeping the bacteria out from the gum line. Bleeding gums are a sign of unhealthy tissue. Remember healthy gums do not bleed.

Teeth can be more sensitive to temperatures, sweets and toothbrush bristles. Calculus and plaque act like insulators around the teeth. To reduce sensitivity, use toothpaste for sensitive teeth. In isolated cases, where bone loss has been extreme and calculus was heavy, teeth may appear to be “loose”. The calculus is so well mineralized and tenacious that it actually splints the teeth together and gives a false sense of stability. Once the gums start to heal the gums may “tighten” the teeth again.

The taste in your mouth and breath should start to improve with the reduction of gum infection and the physical removal of calculus and plaque. Listerine can be beneficial on a regular daily basis to reduce plaque and improve the taste in your mouth and breath.

Good oral hygiene is critical! Daily removal of new plaque is a necessity. A personal goal should be to brush thoroughly at least two times per day (one of those times should be for 3 minutes, and one of those times before bed time). Use floss and/or toothpicks on a daily basis, as well as an antibacterial mouthwash like Listerine or Oral B Fluorinse.

**If you have any questions or concerns, experience any unusual symptoms, or anything that you feel is out of the ordinary, remember that we are only a phone call away at: (954)316-4444.**