



INFROMATION ON SCALING AND POLISHING

What is scaling?

Scaling is carried out by a dentist or hygienist to remove deposits (plaque and tartar) from your teeth.

Plaque is a soft, sticky substance that builds up on your teeth. It is mostly made up of bacteria. The bacteria in plaque feeds on sugar from food and drink, producing acids as a waste product. The acids attach to the teeth by dissolving the minerals in the tooth surface. If this happens too often, tooth decay results. The presence of the plaque on the tooth, next to the gum, will result in inflammation and infection of the gum and/or bone.

Tartar (also known as 'calculus'), formed by hardened plaque, helps plaque to gather and makes it harder to remove when you brush. You can't remove tartar just by brushing your teeth, but a dentist or hygienist can remove it using special instruments— this is known as scaling.

What is polishing?

A dentist or hygienist can also polish your teeth. This removes stains from coffee, tea, cigarettes and red wine; and it makes it more difficult for plaque to stick to your teeth. If you clean your teeth very thoroughly at home, your scale and polish treatment will take less time.

Scaling and Polishing - how is this done?

Dentists and hygienists use two types of instruments for scaling:

- Hand scalers are metal scrapers that come in different sizes and shapes, to reach different parts of the teeth. This is why you will see the dentist or hygienist changing instruments quite often.
- Electric ultrasonic scalers use a tip that vibrates very fast in a stream of water that makes the process more efficient. The water is removed from your mouth using a small suction device.
- For polishing, your dentist will use a rotating brush or rubber polisher with a special toothpaste.
- Airflow (sparkling clean), in addition to the hand and ultrasonic cleaning, uses fine bicarbonate powder driven by air/water under pressure to remove most stubborn external stains.

Scaling cleans above and below the gum line. If you have gum disease, your dentist may also carry out deeper scaling, around the roots of the teeth, this is called 'root planning'. Your dentist may give you a local anesthetic for this. Your dentist or dental hygienist will also tell you about the best way to clean your teeth and gums thoroughly at home.



In more difficult cases where gum inflammation or disease is resistant to treatment, the option might be given for a referral to a periodontist for more specialized treatment.

You should be aware that these cleaning methods will not whiten a tooth that has internal staining and for this other cosmetic methods should be considered.

Risks and complications

There is a risk that after having a scale and polish procedure the teeth to become. This is most often due to the exposure of the roots because of the gum shrinkage. Whilst the root exposures were covered by heavy tartar deposits, the sensitivity was absent, but after after the tartar removal the sensitivity might creep in and persist for a while. Using a sensitive type of toothpaste usually brings relief.

Regular maintenance

It is very important that oral hygiene is performed on a daily basis to maintain good oral health. Regular hygiene visits with the dentist or hygienist are also recommended as tartar deposits cannot be removed just by regular brushing. Your dentist/hygienist will advise you on the recommended frequency of hygiene visits based on the status of your dentition and your ability to maintain oral hygiene in between appointments.