

# Periodontal Treatment

We have many options for the treatment of periodontal problems. The first step almost always involves scaling and root planing of the teeth.

This initial treatment usually involves 2 appointments, usually 1 1/2 hours each visit, with a follow-up appointment 3 weeks later.

## **Why does scaling and root planing take so long?**

An ultrasonic scaler (a unit that vibrates at high speed to break away tartar attached to the root surfaces while flushing the pockets out with water at the same time) and specially designed hand scalers are used during the first two appointments. The operator completes several strokes along the roots of each of the teeth being treated in order to produce a glass-like surface. However, even with these specific instruments and thorough scaling, studies indicate we cannot usually completely clean root surfaces with pockets over 4 mm.

## **Does It Hurt?**

The first two visits are usually done with anesthetic to keep you more comfortable. Nitrous oxide can be used if necessary. Few patients report any discomfort beyond the first day.

## **Will the pockets heal or return to normal after SRP?**

SRP (scaling and root-planing) gives the tissues a chance to heal, resulting in a shallower pocket that is easier for you to maintain with brushing and flossing.

## **The Third Appointment**

The third appointment is to evaluate how much healing has occurred, how well you are maintaining them, and to clean and polish the teeth (prophylaxis) above the gum line.

## **If I brush and floss more, will they heal up without SRP?**

If you have pockets that you cannot reach to clean, it's not likely that doing the same thing more often will heal the disease. We can only tell you the condition of the tissues now, and the accepted and proven form of treatment for that condition. There may be other therapies that work for you. You will have to make a decision on alternate treatments on your own. We cannot recommend these, though we cannot say they won't work. It is important for you to understand that it is your responsibility to keep the bacteria from entering the space between the gums again. Specific brushing and flossing techniques will be explained. Sometimes other aids may be suggested according to your needs (i.e.-interproximal toothbrush, etc.)

## **Maintenance**

After the evaluation appointment, we will allow some time for healing. This varies from one individual to the next. We will plan to see you every 2, 3, or 4 months for maintenance scaling and root-planing. At each of these visits we will let you know how well you are removing the plaque around the teeth. You need to brush at least twice a day, floss daily, and brush your tongue.

## **If the pockets do not heal, then what do we do?**

If bleeding and deep pockets still persist, it may be necessary to readapt the gum tissues to the bone (osseous surgery), place a barrier that allows the bone to regenerate (guided tissue regeneration), or place an antibiotic-impregnated fiber in the pocket (periodontal fiber).

## **Can the bone grow back?**

On its own, usually not. In some isolated bone defects, it may grow back after SRP. We can now place a special material over the bone to predictably regenerate bone in some cases.

\*\*\* There are a small percentage of cases (less than 10%), which seem to reject all treatment.