

## Treating Periodontal Disease

Periodontal treatment methods depend upon the type and severity of the disease. If the disease is caught very early (when it is gingivitis), and no damage has been done to the supporting structures under the teeth, you may simply have a professional cleaning and be given instructions on improving your daily oral hygiene.

Even with these measures, some patients develop more severe periodontal disease that must be treated. The first step usually involves a special cleaning, called scaling and root planing. In this treatment, plaque and tartar are carefully removed down to the bottom of each periodontal pocket. Part of this procedure includes smoothing the tooth's root surfaces to allow the gum tissue to heal and reattach to the tooth. This is sometimes also called "periodontal cleaning" or "deep cleaning" and may take more than one visit.

Your dentist also may recommend medicines to help control infection and pain, or to aid healing. These medicines could include a pill, a mouthrinse, or a substance that the dentist places directly in the periodontal pocket after scaling and root planing. Your dentist may also stress the need to stop using tobacco and to control any related systemic disease, like diabetes.

At your follow up visits, the dentist or hygienist measures the pocket depths again to check the effect of the scaling and root planing. If the disease continues to advance to the point where the periodontal pockets deepen and the supporting bone is lost, more treatment may be necessary. You may be referred to a periodontist.



Scaling removes plaque and tartar from below the gum line.



Root planing smooths the tooth root and helps the gums re-attach to the tooth.

### Periodontal Surgery

When deep pockets develop, it is difficult to completely remove plaque and tartar even with careful

oral hygiene. If the pockets do not heal after scaling and root planing, periodontal surgery may be needed to reduce the pocket depth and make teeth easier to keep clean.

Surgery allows the dentist to get to hard-to-reach areas that require the removal of tartar and plaque. The gums are stitched back into place or into a new position to make tissue snug around the tooth.

If bone has been destroyed by periodontal disease, bone surgery may be needed to rebuild or reshape bone destroyed by periodontal disease. Splints, bite guards or other appliances may be used to hold loose teeth in place and to help tissues heal. If too much gum or bone tissue has been lost, a gum or bone graft may be performed.

Sometimes a membrane layer is placed at the surgical area to help the gum tissue stay in place while the tooth root re-attaches to the supporting ligament. This is called guided tissue regeneration. After healing, the membrane dissolves or is removed. After surgery, the dentist may apply a protective dressing over teeth and gums and a special mouthrinse may be recommended or prescribed. An antibiotic and pain reliever also may be prescribed.

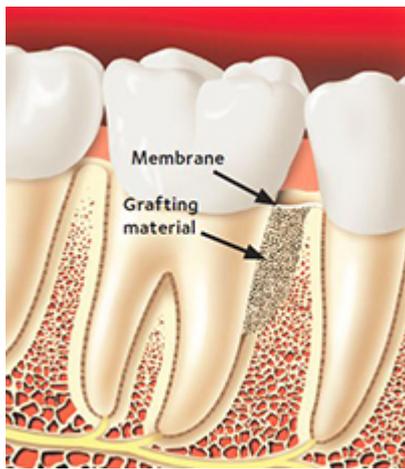
## Periodontal Surgery



Diseased tissue is removed from the pocket. In some cases, the bone may be reshaped.



Bone has been reshaped.



Grafting material is placed over the bone. A membrane covers the grafting material.



After the healing period

## Care after treatment

Once your periodontal treatment is completed, your dentist may recommend more frequent checkups. Regular dental visits and deep cleanings are important to keep periodontal disease under control. In some cases, your appointments may alternate between your general dentist and a periodontist.

Good oral hygiene at home is also important to help keep periodontal disease from becoming more serious or from coming back. It just takes a few minutes twice a day to care for your teeth and gums. Daily cleaning helps keep the plaque under control and reduces tartar buildup.



If you use tobacco, ask your dentist or physician for information about how to successfully stop the habit. Tobacco contains chemicals that can slow the healing process and make the treatment results less predictable.

You don't have to lose teeth to periodontal disease. Brush, clean between your teeth, eat a balanced diet, and schedule regular dental visits for a lifetime of healthy smiles.

*When choosing dental care products, look for those that display the American Dental Association's Seal of Acceptance. The Seal of Acceptance tells you that, when used as directed, the product meets the ADA's standards for safety and effectiveness.*