

**Q. Why does my insurance cover only 2 cleanings a year or just one every six months?**

**A.** Insurance companies cover cleanings as a preventive service. They assume that there is no severe tartar buildup or pocketing and therefore one cleaning every six months should be sufficient to keep good oral health. Some plans cover additional cleanings under periodontal services. Each contract will have different restrictions so see your plan booklet or employer for definitions and covered services. *Please keep in mind that although your employer determines the amount of your dental coverage, your needs are individual. You deserve the best quality treatment available and our recommendations to you will always reflect that philosophy.*

**Q. What is being checked during my dental examinations?**

**A.** Our clinical examinations include much more than just looking for cavities. For any dental problems found, we will help you to understand your present situation, how treatment will help, and what may happen without treatment. The exam will include:

- Evaluation of present restorations (fillings, crowns, bridges, dentures) for looseness, fractures, decay, food traps and other problems.
- Oral Cancer Exam: the lips, cheeks, gums, tongue, throat, palate and under the tongue are checked for anything unusual. Early detection is very important.
- Cosmetic concerns. - Bite Problems. - TMJ problem. -Mobility of teeth.

POCKETS	BONE LOSS ON XRAY	BLEEDING	GUM COLOR	PLAQUE & TARTAR	GUM RECESSION	MOVING TEETH
1 - 4	NO	NO	(Pink) NORMAL	LIGHT	NO	NO
4 - 6	YES	YES	RED	MODERATE	YES	YES
6+				HEAVY		

Treatment:           \_\_\_ 6 months           \_\_\_ 3 months           \_\_\_ 2 - 4 weeks (After Healing)

                          \_\_\_ SCALING & ROOT PLANING with HYGIENIST

                          \_\_\_ SCALING & ROOT PLANING with DOCTOR   \_\_\_ REFER to SPECIALIST

HOME CARE Areas of concern: \_\_\_ Upper Right   \_\_\_ Lower Right   \_\_\_ Upper Left   \_\_\_ Lower Left

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*You do not need to lose your teeth to gum disease. Proper brushing, flossing and diet, together with cleanings and examinations will help you to keep your teeth a lifetime.*

## Commonly Asked Dental Hygiene Questions

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**Q. What is done during dental cleanings?**

**A.** The most important goal of dental cleanings is to remove the harmful debris from teeth, so that the tooth support (Gum tissue and Bone) will stay strong. Surface stains are also removed when the teeth are polished. One of the main factors that determine the type of cleaning is the amount of debris (Plaque and Tartar) on the teeth and the health of the tooth support.

**Q. I'm confused when the dentist talks about plaque and tartar. What is the difference?**

**A.** Knowing the language of gum disease can help you fight the tooth threatening condition. Plaque is the colorless coating full of harmful bacteria that sticks to your teeth. You can remove it when you brush and floss properly. Tartar (also called Calculus) is the unsightly cement-like substance that builds up along and under the gum line. Tartar can only be removed by a dentist or hygienist. Both plaque and tartar are full of harmful bacteria that cause gum disease and dissolve bone away from around your teeth.

**Q. Does a "cleaning" clean both my teeth and gums?**

**A.** The debris (plaque and tartar) that sticks to teeth causes the gums to be red, puffy, sensitive and to bleed easily. When the debris is removed from the teeth, the gums can heal to a healthy condition.

**Q. Sometimes my teeth are cleaned with a machine that sprays water and makes a funny noise. Why is this used?**

**A.** A machine called a cavitron is often used at hygiene visits. The cavitron is an ultrasonic instrument that will help remove tartar efficiently. The water acts as a coolant and also helps to flush out and destroy harmful bacteria.

**Q. I often hear the term “pockets” when discussing gum disease. What does this mean?**

**A.** “Pockets” is the term used to indicate bone loss from around the teeth. As more bone is dissolved away by harmful bacteria, a space or “pocket” is formed between the tooth and the gum. The deeper the pocket the less bone support exists and the weaker the tooth. Any pocket over 4 millimeters is a concern to us.

**Q. Why do gums bleed?**

**A.** As pockets get deeper, it becomes impossible to clean under the gum with a toothbrush or floss. The gum gets infected and bleeds easily.

**Q. Why are my teeth sometimes sensitive (to cold) after my teeth are cleaned?**

**A.** The tartar buildup can insulate the teeth. Once the tartar is removed there can be sensitivity. This is temporary.

**Q. Why can't the hygienist finish my visit today?**

**A.** If your gums are badly inflamed, if it has been a long time since your last cleaning, or if you have had a lot of tartar under your gums, it is impossible to properly treat you in one visit (regardless of how much time would be devoted to it).

After the first cleaning session, the gums can begin to heal. After a few weeks of healing, the gums will “shrink” back closer to their healthy position. A second visit is needed *after the gums have begun to heal* so that we can thoroughly remove the remaining tartar and allow your teeth and gums to be their healthiest.

**Q. What are the different kinds of cleanings that may be recommended?**

**A.** Usually we will do a “**prophylaxis**” on patients every 6 months. At this cleaning visit we remove plaque and easily accessible tartar. We will usually do this in one visit.

If there is much tartar under the gums or if it has been a very long time since your last cleaning, we may need to see you for a second visit after a few weeks. This time is needed to allow the gums to begin healing. You should feel the improvement and your gums should begin to bleed less and “shrink” back to their healthy position. But the job isn't done. A second visit is necessary after the gums have begun to heal in order to remove the remaining tartar.

Often a “**debridement**” is needed. This procedure is done when there is so much plaque and tartar, it is difficult to evaluate the true health of the teeth and gums. It will be followed by further treatment.

In situations where pockets are deep (over 5 millimeters), it is impossible for us to clean well. Instead we recommend a “**scaling & root planing**”. Scaling is the removal of unhealthy root surfaces so that the surrounding tissue can heal. We do this with local anesthesia so that a thorough job can be done with minimal discomfort. We will usually do ¼ of your mouth each visit. This is NOT gum surgery. You should not have discomfort afterwards. After the scaling and root planing treatment is complete the pockets should improve considerably as the gums heal. Usually you will be advised to return for “**maintenance**” every 3 months. These are cleanings which will help to prevent a recurrence or deterioration of your situation.

**Q. In the past, I was seen for a cleaning every 6 months. Now I am told I need to come in more often. Why is that?**

**A.** An evaluation based on the health of your gums TODAY is done during your visit. We check to see if you are overdue since your last visit. Is there extensive tartar buildup? Are you brushing and flossing effectively? Are your gums red, puffy and bleeding? Are the pockets getting deeper than they used to be? Where necessary we may advise you to come in more often for cleanings.