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By Chris Tighe at 3:19 pm, Jun 21, 2016

Oral Care

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Root Planing and Scaling for Gum Disease

Root planing and scaling is one of the most effective ways to treat [gum disease](#) before it becomes severe. Root planing and scaling cleans between the gums and the [teeth](#) down to the [roots](#). Your dentist may need to use a [local anesthetic](#) to numb your gums and the roots of your [teeth](#).

Some dentists and dental hygienists will use an ultrasonic tool for the planing and scaling. This tool is not as uncomfortable as a standard scraping tool, but not all cleanings require this type of tool.

Your dentist may place [antibiotic fibers](#) into the pockets between your [teeth](#) and gums. The [antibiotic](#) will help speed healing and prevent infection. The dentist will remove the fibers about 1 week after the procedure.

What To Expect After Treatment

If anesthesia is used, your lips and gums may remain numb for a few hours. Planing and scaling causes little or no discomfort.

Why It Is Done

Root planing and scaling is done when gums have either started to pull away from the teeth or the roots of the teeth have hard mineral deposits ([tartar](#)) on them.

How Well It Works

If you maintain good [dental care](#) after the procedure, the progression of [gum disease](#) should stop. And you gums will heal and become firm and pink again.

Risks

Root planing and scaling can introduce harmful bacteria into the bloodstream. Gum tissue is also at risk of infection. You may need to take [antibiotics](#) before and after surgery if you have a condition that puts you a high risk for a severe infection or if infections are particularly dangerous for you. You may need to take [antibiotics](#) if you:

- Have certain [heart](#) problems that make it dangerous for you to get a [heart](#) infection called [endocarditis](#)
- Have an [impaired immune system](#).
- Had recent major surgeries or have man-made body parts, such as an artificial hip or heart valve.

What To Think About

- Root planing and scaling is a simple procedure that can work very well to stop [gum disease](#).
- Brush and floss regularly afterward. Without proper [dental care](#), your gum disease may progress.
- To promote healing, stop all use of [tobacco](#). [Smoking](#) or using spit tobacco reduces your ability to fight infection of your gums and delays healing. To learn more, see the topic [Quitting Smoking](#).

Complete the [special treatment information form \(PDF\)](#) to help you understand this treatment.

ByHealthwise Staff

Primary Medical ReviewerAdam Husney, MD - Family Medicine

Specialist Medical ReviewerSteven K. Patterson, BS, DDS, MPH - Dentistry

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Last Updated: November 14, 2014

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