

Oral Prophylaxis in Periodontics - Myths and truth



Oral prophylaxis or cleaning of teeth from stains and calculus is a preventive measure for halting the initiation or progression of gingival and periodontal disease.

In very basic word, oral prophylaxis (scaling) can be defined as “a complete cleaning procedure of oral cavity which includes removal of etiologic agents (plaque, calculus, stains, materia alba, etc.) which irritates gums can cause inflammation leads to periodontitis and gingivitis.

A scale and polish are usually done after a gross debridement on people with moderate-to-severe gingivitis or early periodontal disease. It is basically a fine-tuning to ensure removal of calculus under the gums and to get the patient on the road to health.

Periodontal disease and gingivitis occur when bacteria from plaque colonize on the gingival (gum) tissue, either above or below the gum line. These bacteria colonies cause serious inflammation and irritation which in turn produce a chronic inflammatory response in the body. As a result, the body begins to systematically destroy gum and bone tissue, making the teeth shift, become unstable, or completely fall out. The pockets between the gums and teeth become deeper and house more bacteria which may travel through the bloodstream and infect other parts of the body.

The most important part of a dental prophylaxis involves cleaning below the gumline. If you floss and brush your teeth regularly, then you keep your teeth relatively healthy above your gums. However, below the gums, it is difficult for a toothbrush to reach and it is here that dental calculus can build up. This exposes you to the risk of gum disease and dental decay.

Myths for oral prophylaxis:

- Sensitivity – In few cases, depending on oral health condition for short duration, sensitivity can occur but with time it completely disappears.
- Teeth get weaken and mobile – It is completely a myth in peoples that teeth get mobile after oral prophylaxis, but due to hard calculus teeth gets mobile. In oral

prophylaxis, these hard calculi are removed for that reason teeth can get mobile again it depends on the condition of oral cavity.

- Gaps between teeth.

Reason for oral prophylaxis

- Removal of calculus and stains
Tartar (calculus) and plaque buildup, both above and below the gum line, can cause serious periodontal problems if left untreated. Even using the best brushing and flossing homecare techniques, it can be impossible to remove debris, bacteria and deposits from gum pockets. The experienced eye of a dentist using specialized dental equipment is needed to spot and treat problems such as tartar and plaque buildup.
- Freshens breath
Periodontal disease is often signified by persistent bad breath (halitosis). Bad breath is generally caused by a combination of rotting food particles below the gumline, possible gangrene stemming from gum infection, and periodontal problems. The removal of plaque, calculus, and bacteria noticeably improves breath and alleviates irritation.
- Esthetics
It is hard to feel confident about a smile marred by yellowing, stained teeth. Prophylaxis can rid the teeth of unsightly stains and return the smile to its former glory.

Steps in oral prophylaxis:

1. Supragingival cleaning
2. Sub-gingival cleaning
3. Root planning.

Benefits of oral prophylaxis are as follows:

1. It prevents tooth decay.
2. Prevents gum disease (gingival and periodontal disease).
3. Prevents bad breath.
4. Removes extrinsic stains sub- and supragingivally.
5. Lower risk of systemic disease occurs due to bad oral hygiene.

Oral prophylaxis is recommended to be done twice in a year as a preventive measure, but it also differs in patients having severe periodontal and gingival disease.

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