

Scaling & Polishing

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What is scaling?

Scaling is carried out either by the Dental Hygienist or the Dental Practitioner to remove deposits from your teeth.

Plaque is a soft, sticky substance that builds up on your teeth. It is mostly made up of bacteria.

The bacteria in plaque feed on sugar from food and drink, producing acids as a waste product. The acids attack the teeth, dissolving the minerals in the tooth surface. If this happens too often, it results in tooth decay.

If plaque is allowed to build up, the bacteria in it can cause gum disease making your gums sore and infected.

Tartar (also known as 'calculus'), formed by hardened plaque, helps plaque to gather and makes it harder to remove when you brush. You cannot remove tartar simply by brushing your teeth, however, the Dental Hygienist or the Dental Practitioner can remove it using specialist instruments. This is called 'scaling'.

What is polishing?

Either the Dental Hygienist or the Dental Practitioner can also polish your teeth. This removes stains from coffee, tea, cigarettes or red wine, and also makes it harder for plaque to stick to your teeth.

If you clean your teeth very thoroughly at home, your scale and polish treatment will take less time.

How are my teeth scaled and polished?

Hand scalers are metal scrapers that come in different sizes and shapes to reach different parts of the teeth. This is why you will see the Dental Hygienist or the Dental Practitioner changing instruments quite often.

Electric scalers use a tip that vibrates very fast in a stream of water. The water is removed from your mouth using a small suction device. A hand scaler is also used along with an electric scaler, to check that the teeth are completely clean.