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INFORMED



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Perio Maintenance vs. Adult Prophylaxis

WHAT IS PERIODONTAL DISEASE?

Periodontal disease is inflammation and infection of the teeth's supporting structures, which includes gums, bone, root surfaces and ligaments. Symptoms include:

- Gums that bleed easily and are red and swollen
- An unpleasant taste in the mouth
- Teeth that have shifted
- Teeth that appear longer

HOW DO YOU TREAT PERIODONTAL DISEASE?

Treatment for this disease may require root planing and scaling, which is the removal of diseased deposits from the tooth roots, including tartar, bacteria and its toxins. For some patients, these measures constitute complete therapy, whereas for others, they precede periodontal surgery. Surgery can include such procedures as pocket reduction, soft tissue grafts, crown lengthening and others.

WHAT IS PERIODONTAL MAINTENANCE?

Periodontal maintenance includes those procedures patients must receive after treatment for periodontal disease. This maintenance, which helps prevent further disease, consists of the following:

- Removal of bacterial flora from crevice and pocket areas
- Polishing and scaling of teeth
- Gum irrigation
- Radiographic assessment
- Gum and bone examination
- Review of a patient's plaque control efficacy
- Root planing

HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM REGULAR HYGIENE MAINTENANCE APPOINTMENTS?

Regular dental checkups include scaling and polishing of the tooth crown—that part of the tooth above the gums. The aim of this appointment is removal of plaque and tartar. Plaque is a soft and sticky substance that forms on the teeth. Tartar, also called calculus, is a hard cement-like substance formed of plaque and the minerals in a person's saliva.

This type of hygiene by itself is insufficient for patients who have undergone treatment for periodontal disease, including those with bone loss and infection around the teeth. The American Dental Association says the goal of periodontal maintenance is to minimize progression of the periodontitis and gingivitis, reduce loss of teeth, and increase chances of locating and treating future pathology.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD PATIENTS RECEIVE PERIODONTAL MAINTENANCE?

Generally, quarterly appointments are sufficient, but some patients will require more frequent procedures. Today, maintenance and hygiene appointments are commonly scheduled on a per-patient basis rather than on a general timetable.

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