

Prophy (Cleaning)

What is a Prophy

A dental prophylaxis is a cleaning procedure performed to thoroughly clean the teeth and gums. Prophylaxis is an important dental treatment for halting the progression of periodontal disease and gingivitis.

What to expect during a Prophy

Teeth and Gum Examination: Before beginning the cleaning process, the hygienist uses a small mirror to check the patient's mouth for any signs of oral problems, such as inflamed gums, plaque and tartar buildup, or dark spots on the teeth. This helps the hygienist know what to focus on during the cleaning. If more serious issues such as cavities or gum disease are found, the hygienist and dentist will plan any additional procedures necessary achieve a healthy mouth.

Scaling: Using a small tool called a scaler, the hygienist removes any plaque and tartar from the surfaces of the teeth, near the gum line, and in between the teeth. If excessive buildup is present, an ultrasonic scaler may be used, which uses gentle vibration and water for removing large deposits.

Polishing and Flossing: Next, the hygienist polishes the teeth using a handheld electric tool with a rubber prophy cup attached and a pumice toothpaste called prophylaxis paste. Patients can expect to feel a slow polishing motion on the teeth during this step in the process. The hygienist then flosses the patient's teeth to remove any remaining plaque and paste.

Fluoride: Fluoride foam and varnish treatments are always available, and are helpful in preventing cavities and treating sensitivity.

After Care

Resume your home care regimen of brushing twice a day with a soft bristled toothbrush and daily flossing immediately. If you have had a fluoride treatment wait 30 minutes before eating or drinking. Sensitivity and soreness following a cleaning is very common (especially if there is a lot of plaque on the teeth) and should return to normal within a few days