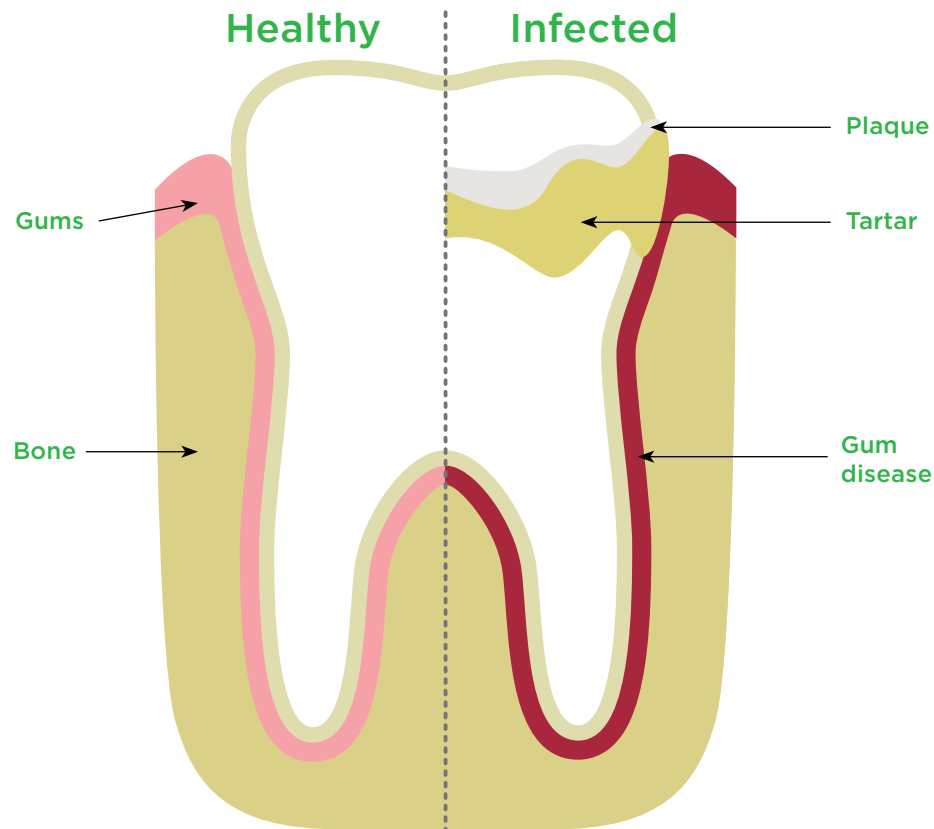




Cleaning

What it is:

A professional cleaning, also called a prophylaxis (prophy), is a thorough removal of all stains and tartar from the tooth surfaces and a polishing of all those surfaces. This may be done by your dentist or a dental hygienist.



Why you would get it:

Your mouth contains millions of bacteria, and although most are harmless, some can cause tooth decay and gum disease. The bacteria in your mouth form into plaque – a sticky film that covers teeth.

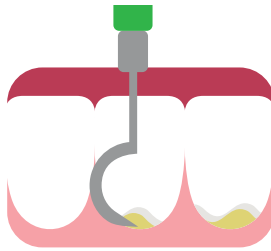
If daily brushing and flossing don't remove plaque, it hardens into tartar, a substance that appears on your teeth and below your gumline. Tartar can trap bacteria and eventually cause gum disease if it isn't removed.

Plaque can pick up stains from the food that we eat. Those stains can harden on the surface of your teeth. Cleanings help remove plaque, tartar and stains that can't be removed by brushing at home. Cleanings are usually part of your regular checkup with your dentist, but can take place independently from an exam.

How it works:

Step 1

You will be seated in the dental chair for the duration of the cleaning.



Step 2

First, your dentist or hygienist will use a small tool called a scaler to scrape the plaque and tartar from your teeth, above and slightly below the gumline. Alternatively, they may use an ultrasonic scaler to break up plaque and tartar with vibrations.



Step 3

Your dentist or hygienist will stop periodically to use a tool that squirts water in your mouth to rinse off the loosened plaque and tartar. Then, a suction tool will be used to remove the remaining water (no need to swallow it!).

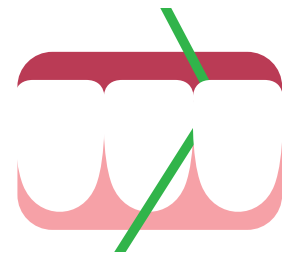


Step 4

Once the plaque and tartar are gone, your teeth will be polished with a gritty, abrasive toothpaste that helps shine and smooth teeth. You may get to choose the flavor.

Step 5

Your dentist or hygienist will floss your teeth and rinse off any remaining polishing paste. You may have the option of rinsing more thoroughly at a nearby sink.



Step 6

To wrap up, the dentist or hygienist will usually provide instruction on proper at-home brushing and flossing techniques.