

A Professional Cleaning Prevents Disease - What You Need to Know, Part 2

We know that controlling bacteria and inflammation in the mouth is an important aspect of both a person's oral health *and* general health. Here at our office, we can help by offering professional dental cleanings on a regular schedule.

A professional cleaning may help prevent disease in several ways:

1. A professional dental cleaning removes plaque from the teeth. Plaque is a soft, sticky substance that forms on teeth, regardless of what types of foods are eaten. It is mainly composed of bacteria and bacterial by-products. *Removing plaque reduces bacteria.*
2. Calculus (also known as "tartar") is also removed. Calculus is a hard, mineralized deposit that is formed from the plaque in the mouth and the minerals in a person's saliva. This calculus is rough and provides an excellent surface on which bacteria can live, grow and multiply. *Removing calculus reduces bacteria by removing a favorable location for these infectious agents to grow and spread.*
3. When a person's bacterial load is reduced, the body's immune system can keep inflammation and infection under control. This not only can help prevent the development of periodontal disease, but can make the entire body healthier. (It is important to realize that even a professional dental cleaning may not be enough to control inflammation and infection for some people. These individuals may be candidates for a more extensive procedure known as scaling and root planing.)

While a professional dental cleaning also removes surface stains from the teeth, making for a more beautiful smile, We now realize that this service is important for much more than just cosmetics. It can be a vital part of the prevention of oral and systemic disease.

How often should a person have a professional cleaning? The old system of everybody having their teeth professionally cleaned only twice a year no longer makes sense. While twice a year may be enough for some individuals to keep their bacterial load under control, most dentists and hygienists now base a patient's cleaning schedule on his/her personal needs. This may be as often as three or four (or more) times a year for some people.

There is much you can also do yourself to keep your mouth healthy:

- Don't put off your regular dental visits. We will recommend how often you should come for regular exams and professional cleanings. Please help us keep you healthy by accepting our advice.
- Maintain good home care. This means daily flossing and brushing for most people, in addition to the use of other devices or products we may recommend.
- Let us know about any changes or issues with your general health, or any medications that you are taking. Medications, in addition to certain illnesses or conditions, can affect the oral tissues in surprising ways.

Now you can see that a professional dental cleaning can be an important part of staying healthy. Call us if you want to know more. We are always happy to help!