



# DENTAL CLEANINGS

## Frequently Asked Questions

Dental cleanings are important for maintaining healthy teeth and gums. But there are different types of cleanings and their corresponding billing code, which may require a different patient payment.\* The information below will help you understand the differences between types of cleanings and the role each can play in the prevention and/or treatment of dental disease. Your dentist will recommend the right cleaning for you.

### Q. What is a prophylaxis – billing code D1110?

**A.** A prophylaxis, sometimes called a “regular cleaning,” is considered a preventive procedure where the dentist or dental hygienist removes plaque, calculus (tartar) and stains from the teeth. The dentist may recommend this procedure at regular intervals, typically twice per year, for patients whose gum health is generally good (healthy gum color and texture, minimal plaque and calculus, and shallow gum pockets around the teeth). A regular cleaning may also be appropriate for a patient with a gum condition limited to mild gingivitis (gum inflammation).

### Q. What is scaling in the presence of inflammation – billing code D4346?

**A.** Scaling in the presence of inflammation is considered to be a therapeutic procedure where the dentist or dental hygienist removes plaque, calculus, and stains from the teeth. Unlike a prophylaxis (D1110) that may be recommended when there is *mild* gingivitis (gum inflammation), scaling in the presence of inflammation may be recommended when there is *moderate* to *severe* gum inflammation. This procedure is intended for patients who exhibit swollen, inflamed gums and moderate to severe bleeding when the dentist or hygienist probes the gum pockets. These gum pockets may be deeper than normal due to the swelling and inflammation of the gum tissue, but not due to any loss of bone that supports the teeth.

The type of cleaning you need – regular cleaning, cleaning in the presence of inflammation, debridement, deep cleaning or periodontal maintenance – is determined by your treating dentist based on:

- › The clinical condition of your teeth and gums
- › Your history of gum disease and treatment

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## Q. What is full mouth debridement – billing code D4355?

A. On rare occasions when there has been significant buildup of plaque and calculus which makes it difficult to complete a thorough examination, the dentist may recommend full mouth debridement. Full mouth debridement is the removal of plaque and calculus buildup from the teeth and gums. This procedure is generally performed before an oral examination and diagnosis, and does not necessarily eliminate the need for additional scaling and/or teeth cleaning procedures.

## Q. What is scaling and root planing – billing code D4341/D4342?

A. Periodontal scaling and root planing is often called a “deep cleaning.” A dentist will recommend scaling and root planing when a patient shows signs of gum disease. These signs may include the finding of deeper gum pockets, loss of the bone that supports the teeth bleeding gums, and/or accumulation of plaque and calculus below the gumline. Scaling and root planing procedures are generally completed by quadrant, or sections of the mouth, and may require the dentist or dental hygienist to numb the treatment area so that the tooth and root surfaces of the teeth can be thoroughly scaled and cleaned.

## Q. What is periodontal maintenance – billing code D4910?

A. Periodontal maintenance is a procedure that is performed after active periodontal treatment, such as scaling and root planing or more extensive periodontal surgery. Periodontal maintenance includes removal of plaque and calculus above and below the gumline, scaling and root planing of specific areas as needed, and polishing. Ongoing maintenance is important because without the appropriate follow-up, gum disease can recur. Periodontal maintenance continues at varying intervals as recommended by your dentist.



Do you have questions about the type of cleaning recommended for you? Take the time to discuss them with your dentist.

\* Please refer to your plan documents to determine which procedures are covered by your specific dental plan and for more information, including costs and frequency limitations.



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