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## **What is “Periodontal Therapy?”**

Periodontal (gum) disease is a chronic bacterial infection that affects the gums and bones supporting the teeth. Left untreated, these infections can lead to tooth loss. While periodontal disease is not curable, it is controllable.

Periodontal therapy is a ‘conservative’ (non surgical) program consisting of two to six visits in an effort to control gum disease. The length of the program is determined by the severity of the disease. The goal of this therapy is to eliminate bacterial re-infection, bleeding, and mouth odor.

Treatment of periodontal disease involves several steps. Ultrasonic and hand scaling is used to remove stains, calculus (tartar), bacterial toxins, and plaque. Root planing smooths the root surfaces of your teeth to promote attachment of gum tissues, and curettage removes diseased tissue. Irrigation with antibiotics reduces the chance of re-infection. Depending on the severity of the gum disease, oral antibiotics, antibacterial rinses, and fluoride treatments may be recommended in addition to a home care regimen of brushing and flossing. In some cases, electric toothbrushes may be necessary for continued health of your tissues.

In order to make periodontal therapy more comfortable, topical and local anesthetics are routinely used. Nitrous oxide is also available for assisting in relaxation.

Upon completion of periodontal therapy, our hygienist will schedule a periodontal maintenance visit. This is to evaluate the success of the therapy, and address any concerns. Typically, six to twelve months is required before new gum attachment fibers become mature and more resistant to bacterial re-infection. As a result, a three month recare visit interval is recommended in order to monitor and maintain periodontal health. As the tissues continue healing, the interval between recare appointments is evaluated and adjusted based on individual progress and rate of calculus (tartar) formation. Personal home care is a determining factor in the continued success of therapy. We will do our best to assist in anyway necessary to ensure healthy tissue surrounds the teeth of our patients for a lifetime!