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## Prophylaxis (1978)

American Dental Association

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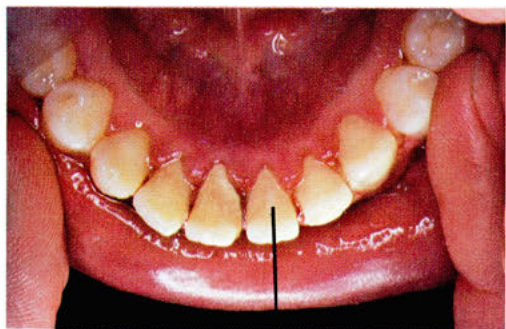
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**PROPHYLAXIS**

MAR 2 1978



Note the calculus at the gumline, especially the front teeth.

#### WHY DO I NEED A PROPHYLAXIS?

By removing calculus, prophylaxis helps you:

- prevent periodontal (gum) disease
- allows your dentist to make a good visual examination of the teeth
- prepares the enamel for a topical fluoride application

More importantly, the smooth, clean tooth surface will be easier for you to brush and floss effectively. For this reason, prophylaxis is an important aid in preventing disease.

Professional cleaning removes surface stains and so gives you a more attractive smile. And, like your daily home oral cleaning, it makes your mouth feel fresher.

#### WHAT IF CALCULUS IS NOT REMOVED?

If not removed, calculus collects even more plaque and usually leads to **periodontal disease—the greatest single cause of tooth loss in adults.**

Calculus irritates the gum tissue. In addition, plaque collects readily on the rough calculus below the gumline and irritates the inside gum surface, causing it to become inflamed, tender, and likely to bleed. This irritation creates a pocket between the teeth and gums where infection can occur. If left unchecked, the disease attacks and destroys the underlying gum and bone. As their support is destroyed, the teeth become progressively looser and may have to be removed.

#### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE A PROPHYLAXIS?

Your dentist and dental hygienist are the best judges. Stains and calculus form on people's teeth at different rates. Some calculus will accumulate eventually even if you are conscientious about daily plaque control. However, **the better your daily brushing and flossing, the less often you will need a prophylaxis.** Remember, when combined with your daily plaque control, prophylaxis is an important means of preventing periodontal (gum) disease.

#### WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN?

Calculus can also form in a child's mouth and should be removed to prevent gum disease. Although gum disease is more common in adults, children as young as five or six may show early signs such as gums that bleed after brushing.

Periodontal problems in later life are often due to neglect or poor care of the mouth during childhood.

In addition, children often receive a prophylaxis to prepare their teeth for a professional fluoride application.

#### THIS IS NOT THE END

Prophylaxis is a professional treatment that aids your own brushing and flossing at home. It can make your job of preventing periodontal disease easier. But, the benefits of prophylaxis will be greatly diminished without your help. Don't stop here—ask how you can help keep your teeth!



1.

The prevention of disease of the mouth and teeth.

2.

A procedure to remove extraneous materials (including stains and calculus—tartar) from tooth surfaces by scaling and polishing techniques.

Calculus is a hard, crust-like deposit that forms at and beneath your gum-line. It is the hardening of removed plaque, a sticky film of harmful bacteria that is constantly forming in your mouth. Once plaque has hardened into calculus, it can be removed only by a dentist or dental hygienist.



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