

Plaque and Tartar Control

PATIENTS OFTEN CONFUSE PLAQUE AND TARTAR AND HOW THEY ARE RELATED TO EACH OTHER

Plaque is a sticky, colorless deposit of bacteria that is constantly forming on the tooth surface. Saliva, food, and fluids combine to produce these deposits that collect on teeth and where teeth and gums meet.

The buildup of plaque can trap stains on the teeth, and it is also the primary factor in periodontal (gum) disease. Fighting plaque is a life-long part of good oral care.

Plaque begins forming on teeth 4 to 12 hours after brushing, which is why it is so important to brush at least twice a day and floss daily.

Tartar, also called calculus, is a crusty deposit that can trap stains on the teeth and cause discoloration. It creates a strong bond that can only be removed by a dental professional. Tartar formation may also make it more difficult to remove new plaque and bacteria.

Individuals vary greatly in their susceptibility to plaque and tartar. For many of us, these deposits build up faster as we age.

The photographs below show the degrees of tartar (or calculus) formation.



Slight



Moderate



Heavy

UNDERSTANDING CALCULUS

Calcium and phosphate bind to form crystals on the teeth. These calcium phosphate crystals eventually harden within plaque, forming calculus. Certain types of chemicals called pyrophosphates help to decrease calculus buildup by stopping the growth of crystals on the tooth surface and preventing new crystals from forming.

YOU CAN HELP PREVENT THE BUILDUP OF TARTAR BY:

Having your teeth cleaned professionally every 6 months, or more frequently as recommended by your dentist

- Brushing with a toothpaste after every meal
- Flossing
- Rinsing with Mouth washes