

## Factsheet

# Professional teeth cleaning

### What is plaque?

Plaque is a sticky layer of bacteria that forms on the surface of teeth. It can develop above and below the gums. If your teeth feel fuzzy when you rub your tongue over them, this is dental plaque. Brushing and cleaning between the teeth removes the dental plaque.

### What is calculus?

If dental plaque is not cleaned away regularly, it can build up on the surface of the teeth. The minerals in saliva can enter the plaque when it is not brushed away. This makes the plaque hard and then it can no longer be brushed away. This is called calculus.

### What is a professional dental clean?

The teeth are cleaned by a dental practitioner to remove the plaque and calculus. A dentist, dental hygienist, or an oral health therapist may clean your teeth.

### Who should have a professional dental clean?

People of all ages need professional dental cleans.

Both children and adults can develop calculus. This needs to be professionally cleaned from the teeth. Brushing at home will not remove calculus.

People with gum disease need to have a professional dental clean to treat the disease. Severe gum disease, called periodontitis cannot be treated without professional dental cleans.

### How often should I have my teeth cleaned?

People who get a lot of calculus build-up, have trouble cleaning their teeth at home or people with gum disease may need their teeth cleaned professionally more often.

People with severe gum disease, called periodontitis, need to have their teeth professionally cleaned regularly. This can be as often as every three months. This cleaning may need to be done by a gum specialist, called a periodontist.

**Most people may need their teeth cleaned every six or twelve months. Your dentist will let you know how often to return.**

