

Hygiene Patient Scripting

Prophy vs Perio Maintenance



Compliments of:

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Please feel free to use the scripting below or create your own!

Patient: What is the difference between a prophy and perio maintenance?

Hygienist: A prophy is done to “prevent” disease in a healthy patient. For example, when we measure your gums, we are measuring in the space where you floss. In a healthy scenario, the readings would measure 3mm or less with no signs of disease like bleeding or inflammation. A depth of 1-3 mm can be maintained through proper homecare like brushing and flossing. If there is no bleeding and no bacteria, assuming your homecare is good, then a prophy will be sufficient every 6 months and we will check your numbers once a year.

A perio maintenance is a maintenance cleaning after scaling and root planning (deep cleaning or therapeutic cleaning) following a diagnosis of periodontal disease. Its purpose is to maintain and prevent the further progression of disease. Once the disease is present and bacteria have invaded the tissue, it is harder to manage. Depths greater than 3mm are harder to access with normal routine home care. Bacteria builds up in those pockets and causes a breakdown of the supporting tissue and bone. Because you can't maintain on your own without the help of a dental hygienist, it is important to come back every 3 months for maintenance to remove the bacteria with our special instruments. We now know, through scientific research, that the bacteria in periodontal disease, if not maintained, can lead to Alzheimer's disease, and can increase your chances of heart disease. Why do you think before a major surgery, they ask you to get cleared by your dentist? Because dental infections or periodontal bacteria can enter your bloodstream and cause complications. That is why we irrigate with medication or treat with site-specific antibiotics to eliminate an infection. If you do not come for your perio maintenance after scaling and root planning, then we wouldn't know if you had an infection and you run the risk of having to repeat the process. We also check your probing depths every time you come in to prevent regression.

Patient: When can I go back to a regular prophy?

Hygienist: Once you have periodontal disease, it must be stabilized and then maintained throughout your lifetime. A person with periodontal disease can become stable but only with the help of a hygienist and impeccable home care. Therefore, it is not recommended to go beyond the 3-month interval between cleanings to reduce the risk of reinfection. The mouth is the gateway to the rest of your body. It shouldn't be elective, and you should take it seriously. I'm here to help you and to encourage you as we are a team!

Patient: Insurance doesn't cover my periodontal maintenance cleanings every 3 months so can I just come every 6 months if I promise to floss and brush?

Hygienist: Well, certainly you can do that, of course, you have that choice, but I wouldn't let insurance dictate your health. They are not on your side. They don't know you as I do. If you have an active infectious disease wouldn't you want to take care of it? How often do you get your hair done and your nails done? It's probably the cost of the monthly Starbucks bill. Is that more important than your health? Of course not! Not to mention, if you don't do anything about it then it will cost you much more later. It's easier and cheaper to maintain in the earlier stages than it is to do a full mouth rehabilitation and I can assure you insurance won't pay for that either. It's about making your health a priority. It's your choice.

Patient: I don't feel like you are doing anything differently than when I had regular cleanings. Why is it more money? You are finished in 30 minutes and it costs me twice as much!

Hygienist: I can understand your concern. It may seem like I am not doing anything different but I am. This is how it is different. I am probing every time you come in to check your health. I irrigate with medication to further kill the bacteria that I stir up during the cleaning. I scale into deeper areas whereas I wouldn't with a regular cleaning. When you are coming regularly, the amount of bacteria and plaque is much more under control as compared to skipping cleaning or coming every 6 months. I have patients that skip their cleanings and go a year or two without coming in for their appt for various reasons, and when they finally do come back in, I must repeat the deep cleaning. You are in a good place and we have come a long way so let's keep it that way.

****** What I have done in the past if someone has consistently been doing well is I have increased their frequency to 4 months pending reevaluation and determine at the next cleaning if we will remain on that interval or go back to 3mrc based on my clinical findings.

******* You should always spend the max time on a periodontal appointment. Take the time to show them you care. Maybe spend 5 minutes just getting to know them more. Offer more patient education and discuss new techniques that you've read about or educate them on something you learned at a recent course about the oral-systemic link. Introduce them to a new product that you may think will help them. Praise them for their hard work and discuss where they were and how far they have come. Never finish in 30 minutes when you have an hour. Make use of your time so that they find value in what they are paying for. If they have outstanding treatment then spend some time on that.

Patient: I've been coming every 3 months for my periodontal maintenance cleanings so why do I suddenly need to do a deep scaling again?

Hygienist: I can understand your frustration and I am also disappointed and quite frankly I'm surprised too. Let's look at the numbers. There has been a regression in the numbers compared to the last visit and you are trending in a negative direction. Has anything changed in your routine? Have you been under stress? Have there been any hormonal changes or changes in health that I need to know about? Dry mouth? New medications? How is your homecare? Tell me, has your routine changed? Well, this is how I see it today and based on these numbers we need to do some localized scaling. While it may come as a surprise to both of us, it's not as bad as it could be, but let's go ahead and take care of it before it's full-blown.

