

Periodontal (Gum) Disease

Gum Disease Overview

Periodontal (gum) diseases, including gingivitis and periodontitis, are serious infections that, left untreated, can lead to tooth loss. The word periodontal literally means 'around the tooth'. Periodontal disease is a chronic bacterial infection that affects the gums and bone supporting the teeth.

Periodontal disease can affect one tooth or many teeth. It begins when the bacteria in plaque (the sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on your teeth) cause the gums to become inflamed.



Stages of Gum Disease

In the mildest form of the disease, gingivitis, the gums redden, swell and bleed easily. There is usually little or no discomfort. Gingivitis is often caused by inadequate oral hygiene. Gingivitis is reversible with professional treatment and good oral home care.

Moderate gum disease is the second stage. It has the same symptoms as gingivitis except that the disease has progressed to the level of the bone and has started to destroy the bone that supports the tooth.

Advanced gum disease has progressed down the root of

the tooth and has destroyed so much bone that the teeth become very loose. The gums are red, swollen, and produce puss from the infection.

Moderate and advanced gum disease is not reversible, but is treatable. The gums can become healthy, but the bone will never grow back.

Treatment for Gum Disease

There are surgical and non-surgical treatments for gum disease depending on the severity of the disease.

The most common surgical treatment is flap surgery/pocket reduction surgery.

Other surgical treatments involve bone grafts, soft

tissue grafts, and bone surgery.

Non-surgical treatments of gum disease can start with root planing and scaling.

This is a treatment that involves cleaning the plaque and calculus off the roots of the teeth to the depth of the pockets.

Then a process of smoothing the roots of the teeth occurs so that the gums can re-attach to the roots of the teeth.

This eliminates the bacteria that causes the infection of the gums. Sometimes an antibiotic is used to eliminate the bacteria and keep the

You may be at risk of gum disease if you answer yes to any of the following questions:

- Do your gums ever bleed?
- Are your teeth loose?
- Have your gums receded, or do your teeth look longer?
- Do you smoke or use tobacco products?
- Have you had any adult teeth extracted?
- Has it been more than 2 years since seeing a dentist?
- Have any of your family members had gum disease?

