

Periodontal Disease Fact Sheet

OCTOBER 2017

The Challenge...

Periodontal disease (gum disease), along with tooth decay, are the two biggest threats to dental health. If untreated, gum disease can lead to tooth loss affecting one's appearance, speech, loss of chewing function, diet and nutritional intake.¹

What you need to know...

- If untreated over a long period of time, swollen, red, and/or bleeding gums can lead to the progression of gum disease—resulting in receding gums and tooth loss.
- Deeper cleaning such as scaling and root planing may be recommended to remove the bacterial plaque and hard deposits (tartar or calculus) from beneath the gum tissue. In more advanced gum disease cases, surgical treatment may be recommended.

The following are risk factors for gum disease:²

- Smoking is one of the most significant risk factors associated with the development of gum disease.
- People with diabetes are at higher risk for developing infections, including gum disease. Diseases such as AIDS and its treatments can also affect the health of gums, as can treatments for cancer.
- Medications can lead to a reduced saliva flow, dry mouth, and overgrowth of gums leading to increased redness, swelling and bleeding of the gums. This can make it difficult to keep teeth and gums clean and eventually lead to bone loss.
- Genetically, you may have more of the bacteria that causes gum disease than others, which may increase your risk for developing gum disease.

Ways You Can Help³...

- Brush teeth gently but thoroughly with soft bristled toothbrush two times daily with fluoridated toothpaste. Consider an electric toothbrush.
- Use floss or some other interdental cleaners to remove plaque and debris from in between the teeth.
- Visit your dental provider every 6 months or as directed. Ask what you can do to prevent and treat gum disease.
- Eat a nutritious, well balanced diet.
- If you smoke, consider a tobacco cessation program. Ask your dental provider about how to access the QUIT Line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

Symptoms:³

- Bad breath that won't go away
- Red or swollen gums
- Tender or bleeding gums
- Painful chewing
- Loose teeth
- Sensitive teeth
- Receding gums or longer appearing teeth

Footnotes:

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/index.htm>
2. http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/periodontal_disease/index.htm
3. <http://umm.edu/health/medical/reports/articles/periodontal-disease>



For more information, contact Office of Oral Health

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