

Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease is a disease of the gums and tissue around your teeth. It affects people of all ages and can result in bone loss and tooth loss, if untreated. The best way to tackle this issue is to visit your dentist on a regular basis, while following his guidelines.

The Cause

Plaque acts as the leading cause of periodontal disease. Plaque is a sticky film that forms around your teeth. To protect each tooth, you have been given a cushion of healthy gum tissue. To keep that tissue healthy and in tact, as well as the tooth it protects, you must brush twice or more a day, as well as floss.

When you neglect to practice healthy oral hygiene, plaque irritates the gums, causing inflammation. Over time, the harmful bacteria in plaque will begin to form spaces called pockets around your teeth. The pockets create a space for more plaque and more bacteria to grow, resulting in infection.

Eventually, this plaque hardens around your teeth and becomes tartar or calculus. If not treated properly, you can actually lose your teeth. Not to mention that this tartar and these pockets create painful sensitivity around your teeth.

Do I have periodontal disease?

The fastest way to answer this question is to schedule an appointment with your dentist. A routine check-up can determine if you fall in this category and if further treatment is necessary. In the meantime, ask yourself these questions:

- Do your gums bleed when you brush or floss?
- Have your gums pulled away from your teeth?
- Does bad breath linger in your mouth?
- Do you have any discharge coming from your gums or in between your teeth?
- Do you have loose or separating teeth?
- Has your bite changed?
- Do your partials fit differently than before?

If you have noticed any of these things, it would be wise to consult with your dentist.

How will my dentist know?

Dentists can confirm the presence of periodontal disease with the assistance of a periodontal probe. This instrument measures how deep the pockets around your teeth are. In situations where individuals have pockets greater than 4 mm, it may be advised to seek further treatment. Aside from the probing, dentists can check the color of the gum tissue, as well as conduct x-rays to see how much bone loss has occurred.

What if I have periodontal disease?

Gingivitis is the lowest on the periodontal disease scale. Patients with gingivitis report swollen, red gums that bleed when they brush. This condition is completely reversible with a little bit of effort on the side of the patient. Flossing everyday is crucial. Brushing everyday is of the utmost importance. Together, these two healthy habits can reverse the gum tissue back to a healthy status.

As periodontal disease advances, periodontitis is the next advance. The patient will experience more swelling, red, and bleeding tissue around the teeth than those with gingivitis. This condition can cause a break down of the bone and tissue.

In order to treat periodontitis, your dentist may encourage a scaling and root planing treatment. The dentist will need to remove any plaque or tartar that is down in the deep pockets. Medicine will be applied to help the infection heal or prevent possible infection. Additionally, the doctor will smooth the root surface of the tooth. This is crucial, because it allows the gums to heal properly and reattach to the tooth. Sometimes, this particular treatment takes more than one visit. Be assured also that the doctor will possibly send you home with pain medicine, if necessary, to aid in the healing process.

Now, if your periodontal disease is such that the dentist feels like you need excessive treatment, she may send you to a periodontist. This particular doctor specializes in the diagnosing, as well as treating, of patients with periodontal disease. Remember, your doctor wants your teeth to stay as healthy as possible for as long as possible. This means she must always seek to detect early on-set of periodontal disease.

Ignoring something like periodontal disease can be devastating to your oral health. Keep up with those bi-annual check-ups. Listen to your doctor and keep healthy oral hygiene habits. Prevention is the best way to keep your beautiful smile and to avoid tooth loss at all costs. Your dentist will always have great reminders and advice on how to maintain your oral health.

Other Helpful Suggestions

- Brushing twice a week with fluoride toothpaste for a minimum of two minutes can greatly improve the health of your gums.

- Flossing is key to healthy gums. Keep it in your purse or backpack or your desk at work. It takes just a few moments and can spare you great cost and pain.
- Your dentist or hygienist may recommend a special toothpaste or mouthwash to help control plaque. Ask them if you are a candidate for such a product. If so, use as directed by them.
- What you put in your mouth matters. Avoid sticky, sugary candies or foods that are not consistent with a healthy diet. This will help preserve the integrity of your gums and teeth.
- Tobacco in any form will always harm your oral health, as well as the rest of your body. Avoid it at all costs.
- Visit the dentist every six months, or more frequently if necessary. Regular check-ups will help prevent and detect the onset of any disease.