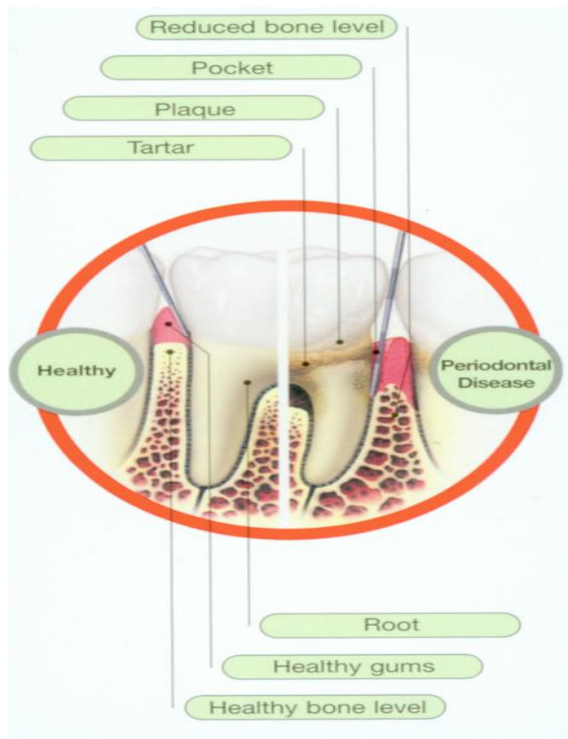


Periodontal Disease

The word “periodontal” literally means “around the tooth.” Periodontal disease



ranges from simple gum inflammation to serious diseases that result in major damage to the soft tissue and bone that support the teeth. If left untreated, teeth eventually become loose and must be removed. In addition, accumulating research links periodontal diseases to general health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, and preterm low birthweight babies.

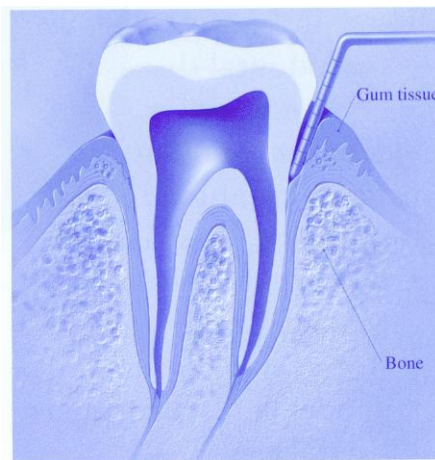
Gum disease is a threat to your oral and overall health. Whether it is stopped, slowed, or gets worse depends a great deal on how well you care for your teeth and gums every day, from this point forward.

What causes periodontal disease?

Our mouths are full of bacteria. These bacteria, along with mucus and other particles, constantly form a sticky, color-less “plaque” on teeth. Brushing and flossing help get rid of plaque. Plaque that is not removed can harden and form bacteria-harboring “tartar” that brushing doesn’t clean. Only a professional cleaning by a dentist or dental hygienist can remove tartar. The longer plaque and tartar are on teeth, the more harmful they become. The bacteria cause inflammation of the gums that is called “gingivitis.” In gingivitis, the gums become red, swollen and can bleed easily. Gingivitis is a mild form of gum disease that can

usually be reversed with daily brushing and flossing, and regular cleaning by a dentist or dental hygienist. This form of gum disease does not include any loss of bone and tissue that hold teeth in place.

When gingivitis is not treated, it can advance to “periodontitis” (which means “inflammation around bone and gum tissue your teeth like a neck. When you have supporting gum tissue teeth and forms infected. The body’s the bacteria as the grows below the gum



the tooth.”) Healthy should fit snugly around turtleneck around your periodontal disease, the pulls away from the “pockets” that are immune system fights plaque spreads and line. Bacterial toxins and

the body’s enzymes fighting the infection actually start to break down the bone and connective tissue that hold teeth in place. If left untreated, the bones, gums, and connective tissue that support the teeth are destroyed. The teeth may eventually become loose and have to be removed.

What are the risk factors of periodontal disease?

Smoking/Tobacco- Need another reason to quit smoking? Smoking is one of the most significant risk factors associated with the development of periodontitis. Additionally, smoking can lower the chances of success of some treatments.

Hormonal changes in girls/women- These changes can make gums more sensitive and make it easier for gingivitis to develop.

Diabetes- People with diabetes are at higher risk for developing infections, including periodontal disease.

Medications- Some drugs, such as antidepressants and some heart medicines, can affect oral health because they lessen the flow of saliva. (Saliva has a protective effect on teeth and gums.)

Illnesses- Diseases like cancer or AIDS and their treatments can also affect the health of gums.

Genetic susceptibility- Some people are more prone to severe periodontal disease than others.

Stress- Often, patients who are having a difficult time coping with stress can neglect their oral hygiene, start grinding their teeth, and even see changes in their production of saliva.

Depression- Depression can affect treatment outcomes and slow healing time after surgery. Mental health is a component of overall wellness, and as such, you should remember that even smiling and having a good attitude can contribute to your overall mental health.

Clenching and Grinding- Clenching or grinding of teeth can put excess force on the supporting tissues of the mouth and can increase destruction of periodontal tissues, especially when bone loss has already occurred. Be sure to talk to your dental professional about wearing a night guard if clenching or grinding of teeth occurs during sleep.

Alcohol- Heavy drinking can negatively impact the oral cavity. Alcohol can irritate the gums, tongue, and oral tissues; it can contribute to poor healing after surgery and can halt your oral hygiene routine. Heavy drinking is also associated with an increased risk of oral cancer.

Genetics- Your genes play a major role in the onset and severity of periodontal disease. Periodontal diseases are multi-factorial, meaning that susceptibility to the disease involves genetic as well as environmental factors such as diet, smoking, and other lifestyle factors.

How do I know if I have periodontal disease?

Symptoms are often not noticeable until the disease is advanced. They include:

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

Any of these symptoms may signal a serious problem, which should be checked by a dentist.

The American Academy of Periodontology