

GUM DISEASE AND YOUR ORAL HEALTH

What is Gum Disease?

Gum disease is an inflammation of the gums that can affect the bone that supports your teeth. It is caused by the bacteria in plaque, a sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on your teeth. If not removed through daily brushing and flossing, plaque can build up and the bacteria can infect not only your gums and teeth, but eventually the bone that support the teeth. This can cause your teeth to become infected, loose, fall out or have to be removed by a dentist.

There are three stages of Gum Disease:

- **Gingivitis:** This is the earliest stage of gum disease, an inflammation of the gums caused by plaque buildup at the gumline. If daily brushing and flossing do not remove the plaque, it produces toxins (poisons) that can irritate the gum tissue, causing gingivitis. You may notice some bleeding during brushing and flossing. Gum disease in this early stage is curable. Damage can be reversed because the bone and connective tissues that hold the teeth in place have not yet been affected.
- **Periodontitis:** Periodontitis is a chronic, incurable bacterial infection. At this stage, the supporting bone and fibers that hold your teeth in place are irreversibly damaged. Your gums may begin to form a pocket below the gumline, which traps food and plaque. Proper dental treatment and improved home care can usually help prevent further damage.
- **Advanced Periodontitis:** In this final stage of gum disease, the fibers and bone supporting your teeth are destroyed, which can cause your teeth to shift or loosen. If aggressive treatment can't save them, teeth may need to be removed.

How do I Know if I Have Gum Disease?

Gum disease can occur at any age, but it is most common among adults. The American Dental Association reports 80% of the population will have some sort of gum disease in their lifetime.

Symptoms of Gum Disease are:

- Gums that are red, puffy, swollen, or tender
- Gums that bleed during brushing or flossing
- Constant bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth
- Teeth that appear longer due to gum recession
- Gums that have separated, or pulled away from your teeth creating a pocket
- Changes in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Pus coming from between your teeth and gums

Risk Factors Include:

- Not taking care of your teeth and gums
- Genetics
- Puberty, Pregnancy or any other hormonal changes
- Smoking or Chewing Tobacco
- Systemic Diseases (diabetes, blood cell disorders)
- Medications (steroids, anti-epilepsy drugs, cancer therapy drugs, and oral contraceptives)

How is Gum Disease Treated?

Your gum disease treatment will depend on factors such as your personal health and the stage of your gum disease. Depending on the phase of treatment needed, you may be referred to a gum specialist, which is called a periodontist. If caught early enough, a team effort of **gingivitis therapy** treatments performed by our hygienist, along with improving your daily oral hygiene habits may cure your gum disease. If your gum disease is severe it is incurable, and a deeper cleaning focused on getting your infection and inflammation under control is required. This type of professional cleaning is called **active periodontal therapy**. Our team will help you schedule a sequence of active periodontal therapy appointments; these series of treatments are proven to be most efficient in allowing optimal healing to occur. Your commitment to these appointments in combination with your improved home care is essential in rehabilitating your oral health. Once your active periodontal therapy is completed, consistent 3 month **supportive periodontal therapy** visits are necessary to keep your gum disease under control.

Healthy Gums



Your teeth are held in place by gums, bone and connective tissues. Healthy gums tightly hug your teeth and do not bleed.

Gingivitis



The bacteria in plaque make your gums red, tender and swollen. Your gums might bleed at this stage.

Mild Periodontitis



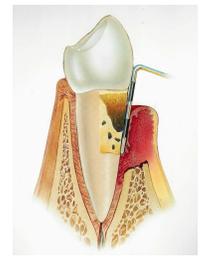
Your body begins to respond to the toxins that the bacteria produce by breaking down gum tissues and bone around your teeth. Irreversible damage begins to occur.

Moderate Periodontitis



Pocket depths increase; plaque moves toward the roots, supporting fibers and bone.

Advanced Periodontitis



Your teeth become loose or fall out or need to be removed by a dentist.