

I What is gum disease?

Gum disease is inflammation or infection of the tissues supporting the teeth . There are two main forms of gum disease : gingivitis and periodontal disease.

I What is gingivitis?

This means inflammation of the gums .The gums around the teeth become red and swollen and often bleed when they are brushed during cleaning.

I What is periodontal disease?

Long-standing gingivitis can progress to periodontal disease . As the disease progresses, the anchoring of the teeth to bone in the jaw is lost , making the teeth loose . If this is not treated , the teeth may become loose and eventually fall out.

I What causes Gum disease?

All gum disease is caused by plaque . Plaque is a film of bacteria , which forms on the surface of the teeth and gums every day . If plaque is not removed , it may harden into a rough ; porous deposit called calculus , or tartar . Toxins (or poisons) produced by the bacteria in plaque irritate the gums and make them red, tender, swollen and more likely to bleed.

As the disease progresses , the toxins destroy supporting tissues around the teeth , forming pockets that fill with more plaque . Bone that supports the teeth may be damaged and eventually lost , making the teeth loose.

However , other factors can affect the health of your gums , such as smoking , medication diabetes , hereditary factors , stress and pregnancy.

I How do I know if I have gum disease?

Unfortunately, gum disease progresses painlessly and slowly , on the whole. However , you may occasionally experience a burst of activity by

the bacteria, which may make your gums sore. Usually the first sign is blood on the toothbrush when you clean your teeth . Gums may also bleed when eating , leaving a bad taste in the mouth . Your breath may also become unpleasant . This can lead to gum abscesses, and pus may ooze from around the teeth.

I What treatments are needed?

A thorough check-up with your dentist and possible X-rays to assess the amount of bone that has been lost is necessary . After being diagnosed with gum disease , your dentist will, depending on the stage or severity of the disease , refer you for treatment with the hygienist or a gum specialist (Periodontist). This may take a number of sessions.

I Why hygienist treatment?

Control of plaque remains the most important factor of all treatment for gum disease and the prevention of dental decay . However, in some clinical situations you may not be able to reach the problem areas easily and consistently . This allows the disease to remain unchecked, or to restart, and may cause the gums to bleed , or the support of the teeth to become unstable, leading to tooth loss.

The initial treatment of gum problems is almost always thorough cleaning of the teeth and the involved root surfaces , combined with the adoption of precise and appropriate cleaning at home by the patient.

Therefore , you will be referred to the dental hygienist for advice and treatment.

I Brushing :

Careful toothbrushing is important in your home care regime . You should brush for 2-3 minutes, twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Use small, circular/vibratory strokes at the gum margin with the brush at an angle . We may advise that an electric toothbrush could be of benefit.

Unfortunately brushing alone is not enough!

I Below the gum cleaning

The toothbrush can't reach under the gumline and special brushes and/or dental floss/tape need to be used to remove the plaque under the gumline. Ask your dentist or hygienist how to do this correctly.

I Cleaning inbetween the teeth

Cleaning between teeth can be achieved with either dental floss/tape (small or tight areas) or interdental brushes (bigger areas or gaps) . Ask your dentist or hygienist which is suitable for you.

I Mouthwashes

Although widely used, mouthwashes have little direct effect on the progress of gum disease because they do not reach into the areas / pockets around the teeth.

Some fluoride preparations are of benefit for reducing the risk of dental decay and sensitivity in affected teeth , where the roots are exposed. In severe cases a medicated mouthwash (e.g. Corsodyl) may be prescribed for a short period of time.

I Referral to a Specialist

Where the disease has been undetected for a long time and the damage to the supporting tissues is too severe, we may need to refer you for more advanced and specialized treatment with a specialist (Periodontist)

I There is no single "correct" way to clean your teeth and to control plaque. Each clinical situation requires personalized attention, which you will receive here . The oral hygiene advice you will receive, and hopefully carry out, is as important as the physical scaling and polishing of the teeth.

Remember :

You only have to clean those teeth you want to keep

Referral to a Specialist:

Before



After



You are welcome to call us for more information concerning : Gum Disease and Oral Hygiene.

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