

Gum Disease - Frequently Asked Questions-

What is gum disease?

Gum disease describes swelling, soreness or infection of the tissues supporting the teeth. There are two main forms of gum disease: gingivitis and periodontal disease.

What is gingivitis?

Gingivitis means inflammation of the gums. This is when the gums around the teeth become very red and swollen. Often the swollen gums bleed when they are brushed during cleaning.

What is periodontal disease?

Long-standing gingivitis can turn into periodontal disease. There are a number of types of periodontal disease and they all affect the tissues supporting the teeth. As the disease gets worse the bone anchoring the teeth in the jaw is lost, making the teeth loose. If this is not treated, the teeth may eventually fall out. In fact, more teeth are lost through periodontal disease than through tooth decay.

Once I have had periodontal disease, can I get it again?

Periodontal disease cannot be cured, but it can be controlled, as long as you keep up the home care you have been taught. Any further loss of bone will be very slow and it may stop altogether. However, you must make sure you remove plaque every day, and go for regular check ups with the dentist and hygienist.

What is the cause of 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. Many of the bacteria in plaque are completely harmless, but some species have been implicated in the development of gum disease. To prevent and treat gum disease, you need to make sure you remove all the plaque from your teeth every day. This is done by brushing and flossing.



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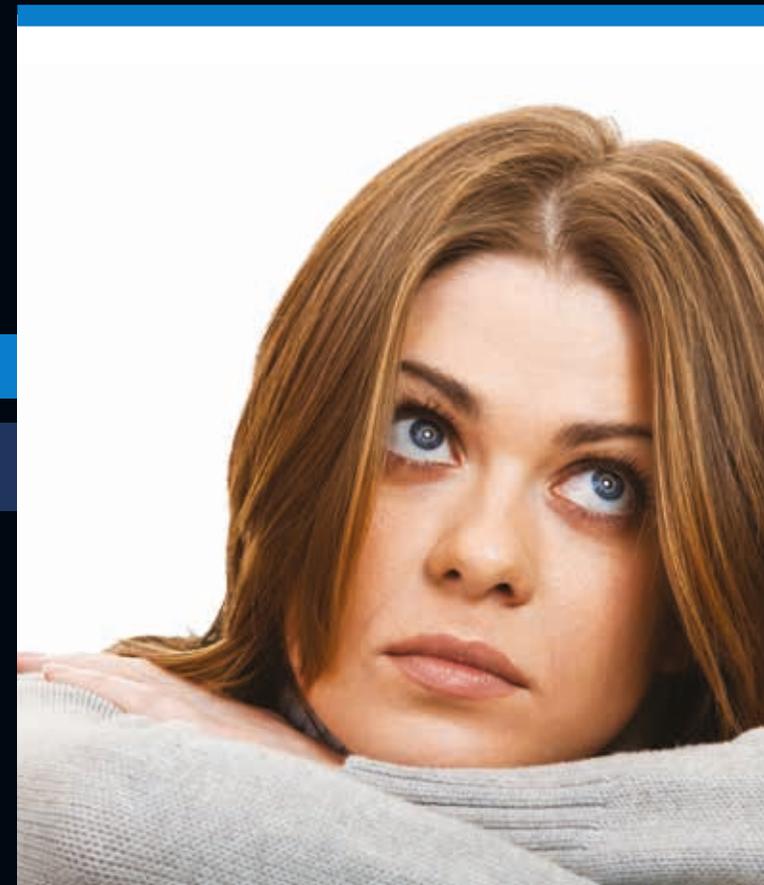
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Gum disease is treatable



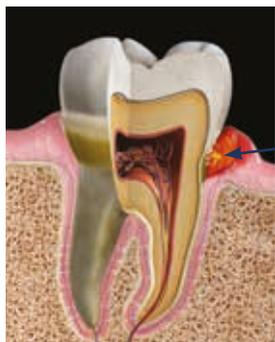
Gum disease

Your questions answered



As gums should be

Healthy gums



Inflamed gum

Gingivitis



Inflamed and shrinking gums

Periodontal Disease

Did you know?

Gum disease can be a indicator of your general health. In fact, gum disease has been linked to health problems such as heart disease, diabetes and strokes. All the more reason to visit us regularly.



“80% of teeth are saved by regular dental hygiene appointments plus good oral health care”

What can I expect at my hygienist appointments?

There are three stages of hygiene therapy:

Stage 1: education in oral hygiene Initial cleaning to begin removal of hard deposits of tartar above and below the gum line. Your hygienist will begin to show you the skills and techniques used to achieve a healthy mouth.

Stage 2: further removal of all deposits under gum line and around tooth margins Periodontal aids may be prescribed and used, e.g. floss, tapes or interspace brushes. Your hygienist can also assess plaque control and improve your daily oral hygiene routine if necessary.

Stage 3: maintaining oral health At this stage you should now have achieved good oral health, and if this is maintained, you will retain healthy teeth and gums for life. Your hygienist will still remove any hard and soft plaque deposits and help refine the skills you have acquired to keep your mouth healthy and disease free.

How will smoking affect my gums and teeth?

Smoking can make gum disease worse. Patients who smoke are more likely to accumulate bacterial plaque, which leads to gum disease. The gums are affected because smoking affects the oral immune response, so the infected gums fail to heal. Smoking thereby leads to more rapidly progressing gum disease. Gum disease still remains the most common cause of tooth loss in adults.

What happens if gum disease is not treated?

Unfortunately, gum disease progresses painlessly on the whole so that you do not notice the damage it is doing. However, the bacteria are sometimes more active and this makes your gums sore. This can lead to gum abscesses, and pus may ooze from around the teeth. Over a number of years, the bone supporting the teeth can be lost. If the disease is left untreated for a long time, treatment can become more difficult. Regular visits to the hygienist are vital for early detection of gum disease.

How do I know if I have gum disease?

The first sign is blood on your toothbrush or in the rinsing water when you clean your teeth. Your gums may also bleed when you are eating, leaving a bad taste in your mouth. Your breath may develop an unpleasant odour.

What treatments are needed?

Your hygienist will clean your teeth thoroughly to remove the tatar. You'll also be shown how to remove plaque successfully yourself, cleaning all surfaces of your teeth thoroughly and effectively. This may take a number of sessions with the hygienist.

Why is it important to visit the hygienist?

The foundation of all periodontal therapy is good maintenance. All treatment programmes are followed by long term maintenance regimes with the hygienist. The maintenance with the hygienist prevents relapse. Annual charts are needed to ensure that disease activity is monitored and kept under control.

Am I likely to suffer from gum disease?

Most people suffer from some form of gum disease, and it is the major cause of tooth loss in adults. However, the disease develops very slowly in most people, and it can be slowed down to a rate that should allow you to keep most of your teeth for life. This is only possible if you have regular dental and hygiene appointments and you adhere to a full oral health regime at home as instructed by your hygienist.