

## Dental Examination to Detect Periodontal Disease

Part of the Initial Dental Examination is the Periodontal Probing Charting. A Periodontal Probe is used to measure the depth of the space between the tooth and the gum (pocket). A healthy pocket depth is -3mm, anything deeper than that is not healthy. Regardless of the pocket measurement, bleeding or pus is indication of unhealthy tissue. A Full Mouth Series of X-Rays is taken to evaluate the health of the teeth, the bones supporting the teeth, and other structures in the mouth.

## Treatment of Periodontal Disease

In the early stage of Periodontal Disease, ie Gingivitis (only the gum is affected), it is totally reversible. Once the bone is affected then the condition is controllable but not curable (bone loss is irreversible). The treatment uses some of the instruments similar to those used for cleaning the teeth. Local anesthesia is administered and instruments are used to clean the tooth surfaces below the gum line, removing the inflamed portion of the gum. This is referred to as scaling and root planing. This treatment will require more than one visit and an evaluation of the progress is made one month after treatment. If there are areas that have not responded to the treatment then a decision may be made to perform surgery in those areas. Prescription medication and mouth rinses in addition to proper brushing and flossing are also a part of the treatment.

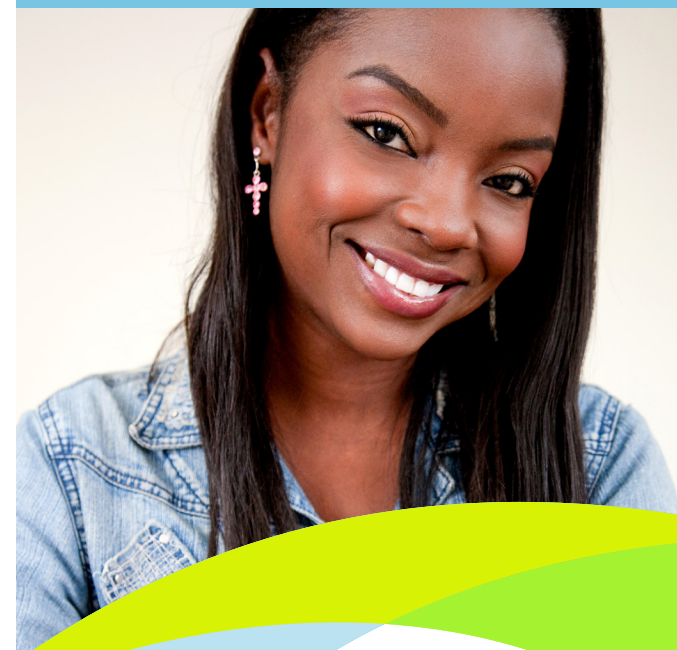
## Prognosis for Periodontal Disease?

The failure to remove plaque on a daily basis leaves an individual with a mouth full of bacteria, rotten food, bone loss, and eventually, tooth loss. Bacteria are constantly eating, and disposing of fecal matter on, and around teeth which is what causes all of the destruction and foul odors in a person's mouth with gum disease. Bone is considered to be the foundation and supporting structure of teeth. Bacteria will make themselves right at home in the spaces between your teeth, constantly devouring what bone is available. As bacteria eat away at the foundation, teeth will become loose and eventually either fall out on their own, or have to be extracted by a Doctor of Dental Surgery. This process is not something that happens over night, but is a result of long term neglect of one's personal oral hygiene. If during and after Periodontal treatment proper dental hygiene is not maintained, the treatment will not be successful and deterioration of the tissue will continue. The earlier Periodontal Disease is detected, the better the prognosis. The better the oral hygiene, the better the prognosis. Unless the treatment of Periodontal Disease is viewed as a team effort between the dental care provider and you, the prognosis will be poor. A great team effort is a win/win situation.



Healthy Gum Tissue

# Periodontal (Gum) Disease



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# WHAT IS PERIODONTAL (GUM) DISEASE?

## Good Oral Hygiene

Plaque is a soft sticky film of bacteria that constantly forms on the teeth. These bacteria create toxins that can damage the gums. It accumulates whether we eat or not. Plaque or bacteria, left for a long period of time, eventually die off. Plaque is easily removed when we brush and floss but if left on the teeth for more than 2-3 days becomes hard and forms Calculus (Tartar). Once the calculus builds up around the teeth, in between them, and the gums, it causes the gums to pull away from the teeth. When the gums pull away from the teeth, it creates a pocket allowing food and debris to accumulate, harbouring even more bacteria. Plaque and Tartar cause tooth decay and Periodontal Disease.

The early stage of Periodontal Disease causes inflammation of the gums (Gingivitis). This results in bleeding (usually during brushing and/or flossing) and swelling of the gums. Gingivitis is usually painless so it can go undetected for years.

If Gingivitis is not treated then the disease progresses from the gum to involve the bone supporting teeth (Periodontitis). Untreated Periodontitis will result in premature tooth loss. In addition to the bleeding seen in Gingivitis, Periodontitis results in mobile teeth (that fall out if not treated), teeth fitting together differently when you bite, bad breath (Halitosis), bad taste in your mouth, gums that feel tender when touched, gums that recede (pull away from your teeth) making your teeth look longer, pus between teeth and gums, new spaces developing between your teeth and changes in the way a partial denture fits

## Conditions Which Make You More Prone to Periodontal (Gum) Disease

**Hormonal changes**, such as those occurring during pregnancy, puberty, menopause, and monthly menstruation make gums more sensitive, making it easier for gingivitis to develop.

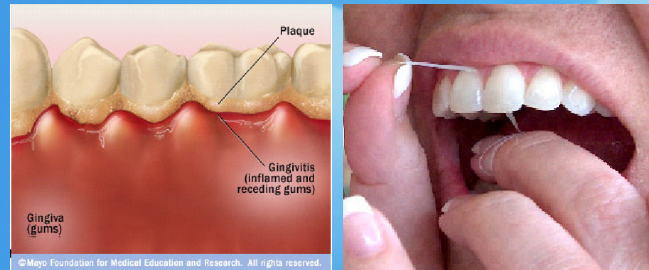
**Illnesses** may affect the condition of your gums. This includes diseases such as cancer or HIV that interfere with the immune system. Because diabetes affects the body's ability to use blood sugar, such patients are at higher risk of developing infections, including periodontal disease.

**Medications** can affect oral health because some lessen the flow of saliva, which has a protective effect on teeth and gums. Some medications such as steroids, some anti-epilepsy & cancer therapy drugs, calcium channel blockers and oral contraceptives can cause abnormal growth of gum tissues.

**Smoking** makes it harder for gum tissue to repair itself.

**Poor Oral Hygiene** habits such as not brushing and flossing daily, make it easier for gingivitis to develop.

**Family history** of dental disease can be a contributing factor for the development of Gingivitis. Crooked teeth, defective fillings and ill-fitting bridges also contribute to the development of Gingivitis.



## Prevention of Periodontal Disease

You can help prevent periodontal (gum) disease by proper brushing, flossing, eating well, taking good care of your teeth every day and visiting your dentist every 6 months to have regular dental checkups. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush to brush your teeth at least twice a day. The mechanical action of the bristles removes the film of bacteria from the teeth. The bristles must be angled (45 degrees) to clean below the gum line. The gums will blanch (turn whitish) when the toothbrush is in the proper position. Fluoride in toothpaste and mouth rinses strengthen the teeth. Ensure that the mouthwash does not contain alcohol. Alcohol dries the mouth and limits the natural cleansing of the saliva.

Although the soft bristled toothbrush cleans very well, it is limited. Only dental floss can reach between the teeth to remove the bacteria and food particles lodged there. Floss between your teeth every day.

Eating a balanced diet allows for proper health of the teeth, bones and gums. Hard crunchy fruits and vegetables help to mechanically cleanse the teeth. Vitamin C rich foods are especially good as they promote healthy gums. Chewing sugarless gum between meals enhances the cleansing of the teeth. On the contrary, a diet high in starch and sugary snacks will decrease the cleansing action of the saliva and promote tooth decay. Visit your dentist every 6 months. Regular dental checkups and a professional cleaning is essential to preventing periodontal disease.