

Eagle Point Dental

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Gum Disease and Periodontal Disease

Periodontal (gum) diseases, including gingivitis and periodontitis, are infections that, left untreated, can lead to tooth loss. Periodontal disease can affect one tooth or many teeth.

The main cause of periodontal disease is bacterial plaque, a sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on your teeth.

Gum disease is one of the most common dental problems adults face, but gum disease can begin at just about any age. Gum disease often develops slowly and without causing any pain. Sometimes you may not notice any signs until the disease is serious and you are in danger of losing teeth.

The good news is:

- gum disease can almost always be prevented,
- if it starts, it can be treated and
- it can even be turned around (or reversed) in its early stages.

How it happens

Healthy gums and bone hold teeth firmly in place. Gums attach to teeth just below the edge of the gums. Gum disease affects the attachment between gums and teeth.

Gum disease begins with plaque. Plaque is clear and sticky and contains germs (or bacteria). It forms on your teeth every day. It also forms where your teeth and your gums meet. If plaque is not removed every day by brushing and flossing, it hardens into tartar (also called calculus).

Tartar cannot be removed by brushing and flossing. Tartar can lead to an infection at the point where the gums attach to the teeth (called the "point of attachment"). In these early stages, gum disease is called gingivitis. Your gums may be a bit red and bleed when you brush, but you may not notice anything.

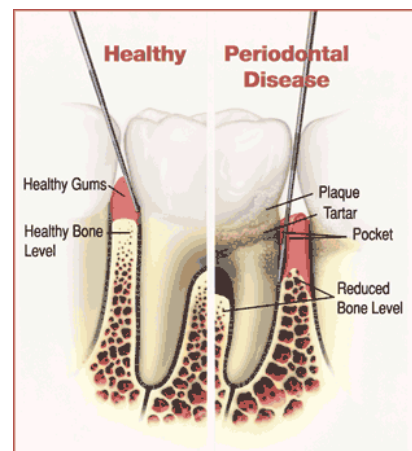
As gingivitis gets worse, tiny pockets of infection form at the "point of attachment." You cannot see them, but you may notice puffy gums, traces of blood on your toothbrush, or a change in the colour of your gums. Your gums will probably not be sore.

Over time, the infection breaks down the gum tissue that attaches to the teeth. This is called "attachment loss." At this point, you will notice swelling, bleeding or colour changes in your gums.

Along with "attachment loss," gum disease causes the bone that holds your teeth in place to break down too. If gum disease is not treated, teeth become loose and in danger of falling out.

Diagnosis

In its early stages, gum disease is very hard to see. You may not know that you have a problem. But every time you have a dental exam, Dr. Chisholm looks for signs of gum disease.



We may use a dental tool called a "periodontal probe" to measure where your gums attach to your teeth. Healthy gums attach to teeth just below the edge of the gum. If your gums attach to your teeth below this point, it is a sign of gum disease. X-rays may be taken to show how much bone is around your teeth.

Treatment

Once your periodontal health has been evaluated, we will work with you to determine the best treatment options to control the disease. Treatment can vary depending on how far the disease has progressed. Initial therapy is generally scaling and rootplaning, a careful cleaning of the root surfaces to remove plaque and calculus (tartar) from deep periodontal pockets and to smooth the tooth root to remove bacterial toxins. This may take a number of appointments. After evaluation, further surgical therapy may be required to control or reduce deep pockets.

Once periodontal disease has been controlled, patients will require ongoing periodontal maintenance to sustain health. This will include regular periodontal evaluations and removal of any new calculus and plaque. Periodontal diseases are chronic diseases. Without careful, ongoing treatment, periodontal diseases can and often do recur.

**HEALTHY****GINGIVITIS****MODERATE PERIODONTITIS****SEVERE PERIODONTITIS**

Prevention

Good oral hygiene and professional care are the keys to keeping your teeth for a lifetime. The best way to prevent periodontal diseases and tooth decay is to remove the bacterial plaque by thorough brushing and flossing

every day. Good oral hygiene habits will help keep the formation of dental tartar to a minimum

Regular dental visits that include a periodontal examination are important to detect any changes in your oral health and to remove hardened tartar in places that your toothbrush and floss may have missed. We recommend a professional cleaning at least twice a year for patients with good periodontal health. If you have had any form of periodontal diseases, you may need professional maintenance more frequently.

Mouth-Body Connection

Research has shown that there is an association between periodontal diseases and other chronic inflammatory conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer's disease. Treating periodontal disease may also help with the management of other chronic conditions.

Checking Your Gums

Check your gums on a regular basis for these signs of gum disease:

- red, swollen or tender gums
- bleeding while brushing or flossing
- Gums pulling away from the teeth making them appear longer
- Loose or separating teeth
- a metallic taste in your mouth
- teeth that are sensitive for no reason
- persistent bad breath
- a change in your bite
- a change in the fit of dental appliances

These are all good reasons to see us at Eagle Point Dental regularly. Gum disease is one of the main reasons why adults lose their teeth. But the good news is gum disease can almost always be prevented. If it starts, it can be treated and can even be turned around (or reversed) in its early stages.

Without enough gum tissue and bone to hold your teeth in place, they can become loose and fall out. Nobody wants to have these things happen. With regular care, they won't.