



Dogwood Family Dentistry Centre

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Understanding your gum disease

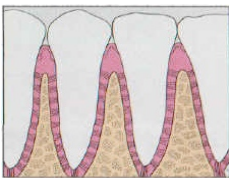
What is Gum Disease?

Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, is a bacterial infection of the gums and bone holding the teeth into place. This infection is caused by plaque build-up. When bacteria also known as plaque, accumulates below the gum line it can become organized like a 'community'. This makes the plaque harder to remove and can cause damage to the surrounding gums and bone.

This infection starts as gingivitis. When plaque is below the gum line it irritates the gums causing them to swell up. This happens when the body's defense system is trying to fight the harmful plaque. If bacteria is not removed properly further damage can occur. Removing this bacteria can reverse gingivitis.

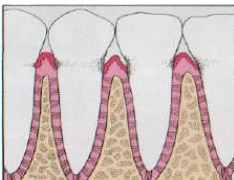
If plaque remains, the infection can progress from gingivitis to periodontitis. In periodontitis, the space between gums and bone has deepened where bacteria travel and release toxins that cause damage to the tooth's supporting bone and gums. This is the body's way of trying to fight off the harmful bacteria. It is important to have low levels of bacteria as periodontitis is irreversible.

Healthy Gums



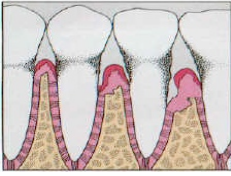
Do not bleed and are not puffy. The space between the gum and the tooth, otherwise known as a "pocket" has a shallow reading when measured by the dental hygienist. Healthy bone levels anchor teeth into place.

Gingivitis



Gums are puffy, red, tender and/or can bleed easily. No damage has occurred to the bone anchoring the teeth in place.

Periodontitis



Gums are puffy and can bleed easily. Plaque bacteria travel further below the gum line and release toxins that damage the supporting bone. The “pocket” between the gum and the tooth are deeper.

Advanced Periodontitis



Gums continue to be puffy and can bleed easily. The pocket reading has deepened even more. Plaque bacteria have traveled further below the gum line and gums are receding. More damage has occurred to the bone levels. This damage to the bone that anchors the tooth into place can become so advanced that the tooth is mobile.

Signs of Periodontal Disease

- Bleeding gums during or after brushing
- Red, puffy and/or tender gums
- Teeth that are mobile/loose
- Deep spaces between teeth and gums
- Bad breath and/or bad taste in the mouth

Some Factors to Consider

Other factors can play a role in increasing the risk of getting periodontitis:

- smoking/tobacco use
- genetics
- diabetes

How to Prevent Periodontal Disease

- Brush teeth twice a day
- Clean between teeth daily
- Eat a good balanced diet
- Visit your dentist and dental hygienist regularly

Created by M.J. Kennah & Kelly Nguyen (October 2007)

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