

Periodontal Basics Overview

Periodontal disease, often referred to as gum disease, is a prevalent oral health condition that affects the supporting structures of the teeth, namely the gums, bone, and connective tissues. It is primarily caused by bacterial plaque buildup on the teeth and gums. As this plaque accumulates, it hardens into tartar, leading to inflammation of the gums known as gingivitis.

If left untreated, gingivitis can progress into periodontitis, a more severe form of the disease that can result in tooth mobility and even tooth loss due to the destruction of the supporting bone. Periodontal disease not only impacts oral health but has also been linked to various systemic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory diseases.

Shockingly, it's estimated that nearly 47.2% of adults aged 30 years and older in the United States suffer from some form of periodontal disease.

Periodontal Disease



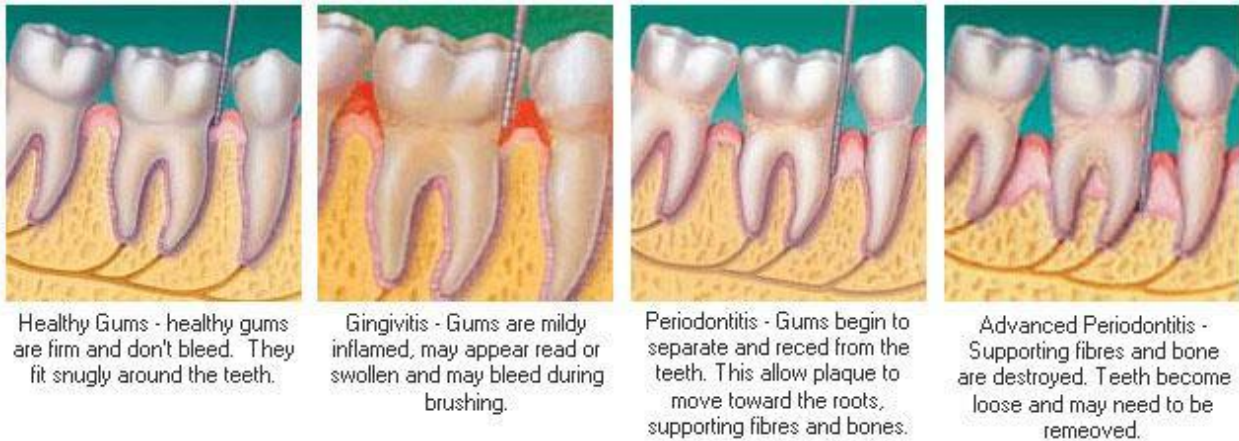
Diseased Gums



Healthy Gums

What causes gum disease? Bacterial plaque – a sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on the teeth – is recognized as the primary cause of gum disease. If plaque isn't removed each day by brushing and flossing, it hardens into a rough, porous substance called calculus (also known as tartar). Toxins produced and released by bacteria in plaque irritate the gums. These toxins cause the breakdown of the fibers that hold the gums tightly to the teeth, creating periodontal pockets that fill with even more toxins and bacteria. As the disease progresses, pockets extend deeper, and the bacteria moves down until the bone that holds the tooth in place is destroyed. The tooth eventually will fall out or require extraction.

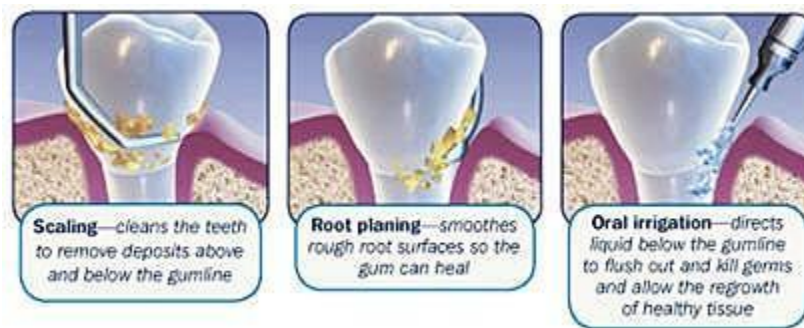
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What is the difference between a regular dental cleaning and treating periodontal disease?

A regular dental cleaning, also known as prophylaxis, focuses on the visible parts of your teeth and just above the gumline. The dental hygienist uses special tools to remove plaque and tartar buildup. It's like giving your teeth a polished shine.

Scaling and root planing (or SRP) (or perio therapy) involves removing the tartar not only from teeth's surfaces but also from the pockets below the gumline. Root planing is like smoothing out the battleground – it involves removing rough spots on the tooth roots to discourage bacteria from reattaching. This procedure might require local anesthesia to ensure patient comfort.



Dentists have several methods to treat periodontal (gum) issues, depending on the severity of the condition. Here are some different ways they might approach treatment:

Scaling and Root Planing: This deep cleaning procedure involves removing plaque and tartar from above and below the gumline, as well as smoothing the tooth roots to prevent bacteria buildup.

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Periodontal Surgery: In more advanced cases, surgical intervention might be necessary. Procedures like flap surgery involve lifting the gums to clean and treat the roots, and then repositioning the gums for a better fit around the teeth.

Gum Grafting: If the gums have receded significantly, dentists might perform a gum graft, where tissue is taken from another part of the mouth or a donor source and attached to the affected area to cover exposed tooth roots.

Laser Therapy: Laser technology can be used to remove inflamed gum tissue and to reshape and disinfect pockets between the gums and teeth.

Antibiotics: Dentists might prescribe antibiotics, either in pill form or applied directly to the gums, to help control bacterial infection.

Oral Hygiene Education: Educating patients about proper oral hygiene practices is crucial. Dentists provide guidance on effective brushing, flossing, and overall oral care to manage and prevent gum disease.

Maintenance Visits: Patients with periodontal issues usually require more frequent dental visits for cleanings and check-ups to monitor their gum health and ensure that the disease doesn't progress.

Medications: Special antimicrobial mouth rinses or gels might be recommended to help control bacteria and reduce inflammation.

Orthodontic Treatment: In cases where misaligned teeth contribute to gum issues, orthodontic treatment might be advised to improve the alignment and make oral hygiene more manageable.

Nutritional Counseling: A balanced diet plays a role in oral health. Dentists may offer guidance on a diet that supports gum health.

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