

Gum Disease

Quick Reference



Periodontal (gum) diseases are infections of the tissues and bone that support teeth. Periodontal diseases are caused by plaque, a sticky film of bacteria that constantly forms on the teeth. If bacterial plaque is not removed by daily brushing, flossing, and regular dental cleanings, the gums can become infected and inflamed.

Gingivitis, a milder form of the periodontal diseases, is marked by red or swollen gums that often bleed during brushing or flossing. Gingivitis is usually reversible with professional cleanings in the dental office, along with daily brushing and flossing.



Healthy gums

Periodontitis is a more advanced form of the periodontal diseases. It results in infection and inflammation of the supporting tissues of the teeth. As the disease progresses, the normal healthy pocket around the tooth deepens, allowing harmful bacteria to grow and making it difficult to keep the teeth and gums clean.



Gingivitis

Without treatment, these diseases can lead to bone and tissue destruction and tooth loss. It is possible to have periodontal diseases without any pain. If you have ANY of the following warning signs, visit your dentist for a complete evaluation.



Periodontitis

- gums that bleed easily
- red, swollen, tender gums
- gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- pus between the teeth and gums
- persistent bad breath or bad taste
- permanent teeth that are loose or shifting
- changes in the way your teeth fit together
- changes in the fit of partial dentures

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Current research suggests there may be a link between the periodontal diseases and other diseases that affect the entire body. Studies have found links between periodontitis and heart problems, stroke, and diabetes. However, more research is needed to determine how the periodontal diseases relate to overall health.

Other factors that may contribute to periodontal diseases include:

- smoking or chewing tobacco
- certain medications, such as steroids, some anti-epilepsy drugs, cancer therapy drugs, and some calcium channel blockers
- bridges that no longer fit properly, crooked teeth, or worn, loose or cracked fillings that may hold plaque in place
- pregnancy, use of oral contraceptives, or changes in female hormonal levels
- stress
- genetics

Follow these recommendations to help keep your teeth and gums healthy:

- Brush your teeth well twice a day.
- Clean between your teeth with floss or another interdental cleaner every day.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit snacks.
- Visit your dentist regularly for an exam and professional cleaning.
- Avoid tobacco.

Notes: _____

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