

FACTS ABOUT PERIODONTAL DISEASE (GUM DISEASE)

Periodontal disease or gum disease is the single most common cause of tooth loss in adults. This inflammatory disease attacks the gums, bone, and other supporting structures of the teeth.

Gum disease is caused by plaque a colorless film of bacteria that forms on the teeth. Plaque mixes with sugars and starches in the diet to form acids and other by-products in the mouth, that then irritate the gums and cause them to become red, tender and swollen. It also causes the gums to bleed easily. When plaque lingers on the teeth because of infrequent or improper brushing, it hardens to form calculus (tartar) around the base of the tooth and below the gums.

The tissue that attaches the gums to the teeth can be destroyed by the irritants in the plaque, causing the gums to pull away from the teeth and small pockets form between the teeth and the gums. As the pockets become filled with plaque and tartar, the pocket will deepen, making it impossible for you to clean, or remove the plaque and tartar. Eventually, the bone structure that supports the teeth can be destroyed and teeth become loose.

Factors that contribute to periodontal disease are:

- Badly aligned teeth, poor fitting bridges or partial dentures, and defective fillings.

- Pregnancy- due to fluctuations in hormone levels, a temporary condition referred to a “pregnancy gingivitis: may occur.

- Medications such as oral contraceptives, anti-epilepsy drugs, steroids and cancer therapy drugs may have a negative affect on

the gum tissue. Many prescription medications have the side effect of “dry mouth”, that may also be contributory.

Certain diseases- diabetes, uremia, liver cirrhosis, anemia and leukemia are among the many diseases that may affect the health of your gums.

Treatment for gum disease may require more frequent cleanings, scaling and root planing or deep cleaning, antibiotic therapy(Arestin), and possibly surgery.

GUM DISEASE AND YOUR HEALTH

Recent studies have shown an estimated 75% of American adults over the age of 35 have some form of periodontal disease, however when surveyed, eight out of ten people believed they did not have any periodontal disease.

Until its advanced stages periodontal disease is usually painless. Yet up to 90% of all systemic diseases including kidney disease, diabetes, and heart disease have links to your oral health.

Periodontal disease increases your risk for heart attacks, strokes and adversely affects the ability of diabetics to control their blood sugar levels. Treating periodontal disease in diabetic patients decreases their risks for diabetic complications.

New evidence confirms that periodontal disease in pregnant women, poses a risk to the health of the baby. Pregnant women who have periodontal disease may be seven times more likely to have a pre-term, low birth weight baby. Menopausal women may experience “dry mouth” due to diminish hormonal levels that may increase their susceptibility to periodontal disease.