

What is Gum Disease?

Gum disease is the swelling, soreness or infection of the tissues supporting the teeth. There are two main types of gum disease:

➤ **Gingivitis**

This is when the gums around the teeth become red. Often the swollen gums bleed when you brush or floss them.

➤ **Periodontal disease**

Long-standing gingivitis can turn into periodontal disease; this affects the tissues supporting the teeth. As the disease gets worse the bone fixing the teeth to the jaw is lost, making the teeth loose. If this is not treated, the teeth may eventually fall out.

How common is gum disease?

Most people have some form of gum disease. Studies have shown that up to 80% of the adult population may suffer from gum disease. It is the major cause of tooth loss in adults.

What causes gum disease?

All gum disease is caused by plaque. Plaque is a film of bacteria which forms on the surface of the teeth. Some of the bacteria have been shown to cause gum disease.

Will smoking affect my gums and teeth?

People who smoke are more likely to have gum disease. Smokers' gum disease will get worse more quickly than in people who do not smoke. Due to reduced blood flow smokers may not get the warning symptoms of bleeding gums as much as non-smokers.

How do I know if I have gum disease?

The first sign may be blood on your toothbrush or floss when you clean your teeth. Your breath may also become unpleasant. In severe gum disease, you may notice loose teeth, gaps appearing between teeth or pain from your gums.

What happens if gum disease is not treated?

Unfortunately, gum disease usually develops slowly and painlessly so you do not notice the damage it is doing. Over a number of years, the bone supporting the teeth can be lost.

What treatments are needed?

Your Hygienist will usually clean your teeth thoroughly to remove the scale. You'll also be shown how to remove plaque successfully yourself. This may take a number of sessions so that all parts of your mouth are treated.

Once I have had periodontal disease, can I get it again?

Periodontal disease is never cured, but it can be controlled as long as you keep up the home care you have been taught. Any further loss of bone will be very slow and it may stop altogether.

I have heard gum disease is linked with other health conditions – is this true?

In recent years gum disease has been linked with general health conditions such as diabetes, strokes, cardiovascular (heart) disease, poor pregnancy outcomes and even dementia. While more research is required to understand how these links work, there is more and more evidence that having a healthy mouth and gums can help improve general health.