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Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease, also sometimes called gum disease, is a bacterial infection that causes swelling of the gums around teeth. Over time, if not treated, periodontal disease can result in the loss of the bone that holds teeth in the jaw. This infection in the gum and bone is the most common cause of tooth loss and professional treatment may be needed to stop it. Lost bone will not grow back but you can, with proper tooth brushing and flossing, bring the gums and supporting bone back to health.

- Even though this disease is preventable, about 50% of people 30 years of age and older have some form of periodontal disease. More than 70% of people 65 years of age or older have periodontal disease.
- Specific kinds of germs in your mouth cause periodontal disease. The build-up of bacteria to plaque, which hardens to calculus if left on the teeth long enough, makes it harder to keep teeth clean. Calculus build-up can spread below the gum line and lead to periodontal disease. Once calculus is present, professional dental cleaning is needed to remove this hard build-up and stop the periodontal disease process.
- Other factors that may contribute to periodontal disease:
 - Poor oral hygiene
 - Nutrition and general health
 - Diabetes
 - Health habits and emotional stress
 - Smoking
 - Female hormonal changes, such as with pregnancy or the use of oral contraceptives
 - Heredity
- Periodontal disease can be painless and sometimes hard to detect. Early warning signs include:
 - Bad breath or bad taste that will not go away
 - Swollen and red gums that bleed when you brush and floss your teeth
 - Loose tooth or teeth
 - Sensitive teeth
 - Painful chewing
 - Gums that have pulled away from your teeth

Prevention

Periodontal disease can be prevented with proper dental care starting at an early age. Brushing, flossing, and regular dental visits and a regular professional examination at least once per year can keep your teeth and mouth healthy for a lifetime. Ask your dental hygienist and dentist to evaluate the health of your whole mouth: teeth,

gums, tongue, and all over inside. Oral cancer screenings should also be performed regularly.

Treatment

The treatment for periodontal disease depends on the extent of the disease. X-rays and probing are used to determine how severe the disease is and the matching treatment options. Treatments may include a deep cleaning of one or more areas of the mouth, medication placed under the gum and next to the tooth, and corrective surgery, or, in severe cases, removal of one or more teeth.

Resources

NOTE: This fact sheet was derived from one previously published by the Arizona Department of Health Services.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/periodontal-disease.html>

Periodontists

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/periodontitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20354473>