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PERIODONTAL DISEASE (GUM DISEASE)

What is Gum Disease (Periodontal Disease)?

It is an infection of the tissues surrounding and supporting the teeth. It is the leading cause of tooth loss in adults. Because gum disease is usually painless, you may not know that you have it.. Gum disease is caused by plaque, a sticky film of bacteria that constantly forms on the teeth. This bacteria creates toxins that can damage gums and bone.

In early stages of gum disease, called gingivitis, the gums can become red, swollen and bleed easily. At this stage, the disease is still reversible and can usually be eliminated by daily brushing and flossing.

In more advanced stages of gum disease, called periodontitis, the gums and the bone that support the teeth can become seriously damaged. The teeth can become loose, fall out or have to be removed by a dentist.

What are the signs of gum disease?

If you notice any of the following signs of gum disease, see your dentist immediately:

- gums that bleed when you brush your teeth
- red, swollen or tender gums
- gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- pus between your teeth and gums
- loose teeth
- a change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- a change in the fit of partial dentures.

*****The only way to prevent gum disease (periodontal disease) is by having good oral hygiene and professional routine check-ups and cleanings. (Please see Preventative Oral Health Care Educational Sheet on brushing and flossing)!**

Treatment of Periodontal Disease (Gum Disease):

Sometimes, no matter how careful you have been about brushing and flossing, your dentist has bad news for you. You have gum disease! Other contributing factors that cause periodontal disease is smoking, genetics, and/or crowded/rotated/crooked teeth which making brushing and flossing very difficult!

Depending on how extensive the condition is, the recommended treatment may be a special kind of DEEP cleaning called scaling and root planing or Quadrant Scaling. Local anesthetic is given to reduce any discomfort, then your dentist or hygienist uses a small scaler or an ultrasonic cleaner to clean beneath your gumline and remove plaque and tartar. Then the root surfaces on the tooth are planed and smoothed. This lets the gum tissue heal and reattach itself to the tooth again. Once bone has been destroyed, the bone never grows back on its own. It is very difficult to surgically replace bone due to the oral cavity if filled with bacteria. So once you have periodontal disease the best thing to do is stop the destruction where it is so that it doesn't destroy anymore bone! Bone may be replaced by bone grafts in some cases.

Once you and your dentist are sure that healing is well underway, be sure to practice good oral hygiene to keep your teeth from further gum and bone damage. This is usually very much assisted by seeing your dentist or hygienist every 3 to 4 months for maintenance cleanings.