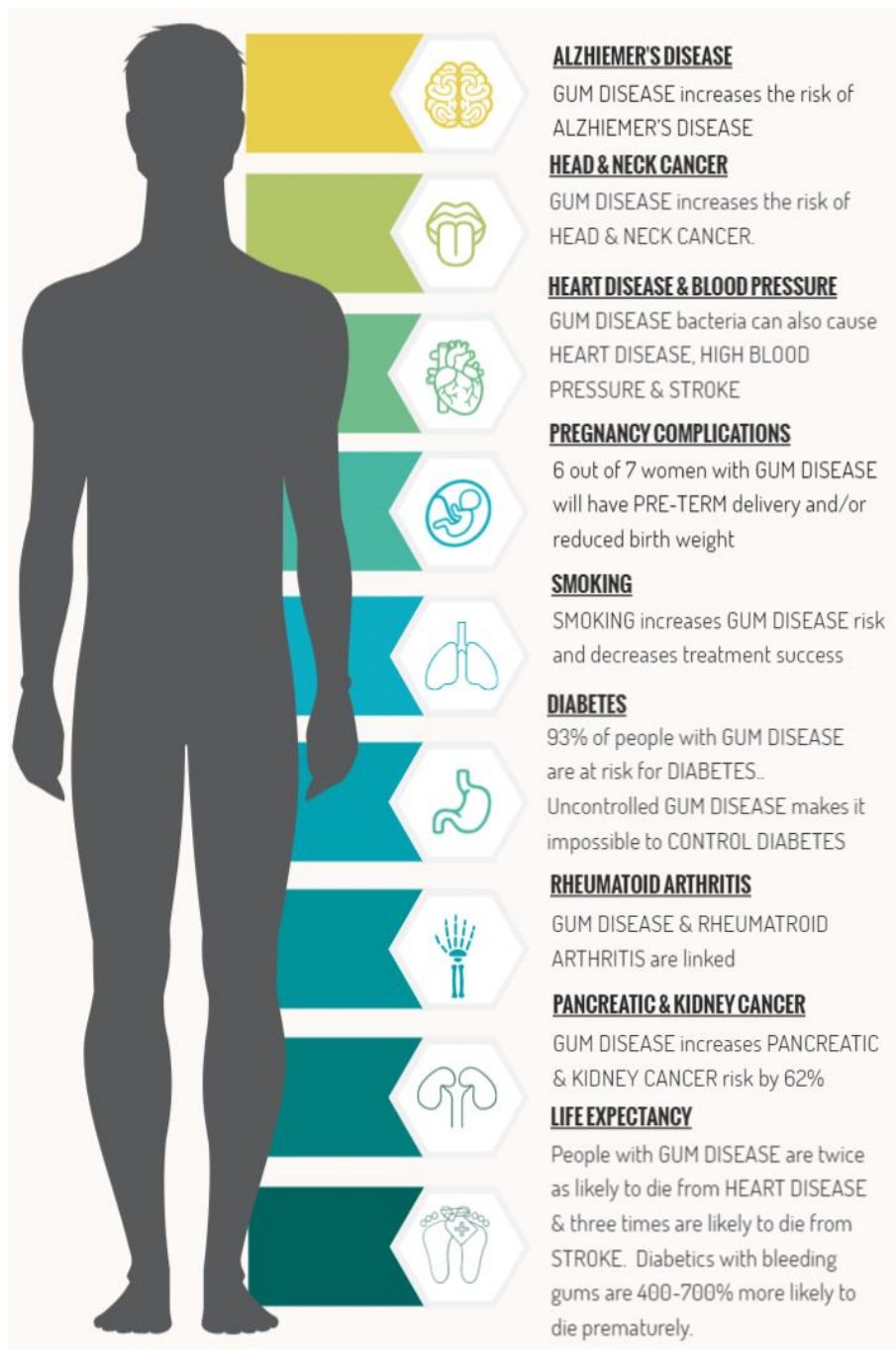


What is Gum Disease?

Gum disease starts as gingivitis – which is mild inflammation of your gums. Your gums may be red, swollen or bleed and you may have a bad taste in your mouth. Gum disease doesn't hurt and is 100% reversible through good oral hygiene habits – flossing and brushing. You will also need regular professional cleans to remove tartar deposits that your toothbrush can't remove. If gingivitis is left untreated, some people go on to develop periodontitis. Periodontitis is when your body reacts to plaque and calculus by resorbing the bone. Your body is trying to do what your toothbrush isn't – it is trying to get your bone away from the untreated infection in your gums. As the inflammation in your gums increases, your teeth begin to act like a pump transporting inflammatory toxins around your body each time your teeth come together – including when we eat, chew and talk. Periodontitis doesn't hurt – but it is serious and does need treatment. Not only can you lose your teeth if enough bone is lost, but it has a huge effect on your overall health including your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Successful treatment will not regrow the bone or unshrink your gums, but it will prevent any further bone loss and improve your overall health.



Healthy Gums

early gum disease can lead to bad breath, bleeding and swollen gums and red gums



Gingivitis

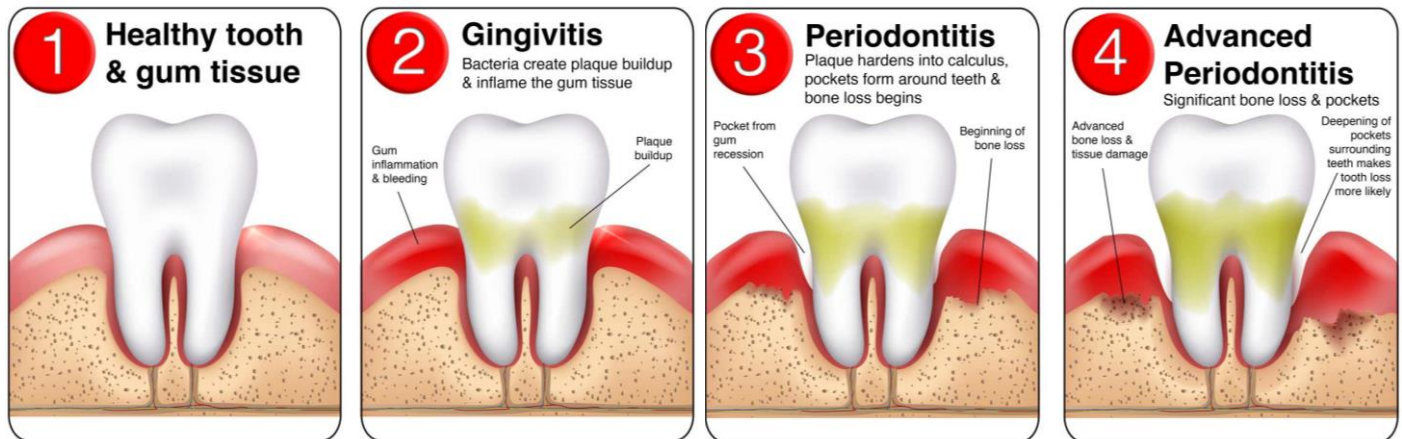
more advanced gum disease can cause the gums to shrink away, wobbly teeth and even tooth loss



Periodontitis

Treating Gum Disease

Gingivitis is easy to treat – your gums will return to health within 2 weeks with good brushing and flossing technique. The key is consistency – twice daily for two minutes is critical whether you use an electric or manual toothbrush. You will also need a good toothpaste that contains fluoride for optimal results. Periodontitis is trickier to treat – although the process itself is straightforward and involves you as much as it involves us as your dental team. Treatment aims to restore your gums to health and prevent further bone loss. Unfortunately, treatment will not grow your bone back; but it will cause your gums to reattach to the roots and stop bacteria below the gum line where your toothbrush can't reach.



Treatment involves taking a baseline of your current bone levels – we use a whole head x-ray and then take 6 depth measurements at various points around each tooth; taking note of whether or not the gums bleed. What we are doing is measuring the distance between the top of your gums and the underlying bone – anything greater than 3mm means your toothbrush can't reach the bacteria no matter how well or how diligently you brush. Next, we clean out the area underneath the gums using specialised instruments which, when done effectively, will allow your gums to reattach to the newly cleaned tooth surface. This is all done under anaesthetic to keep you comfortable. However, as the process flushes toxins and their bacteria into your bloodstream you may feel unwell or develop a fever after treatment.

After three months, we check to see whether the gums have reattached to your teeth by taking new measurements. If the gums have reattached, we review your gums and professionally clean your teeth every three months to prevent the disease from reoccurring. Of course, this depends on you keeping up good home care routines between visits. Sometimes, one or more teeth may fail to respond to initial treatment. If this is the case, we will discuss the likely reasons and develop a plan on what to do next. This might be retreating some areas, working on improved home care, referring you a Specialist and/or prescribing special antibiotics to help fight the infection.

You may notice that your teeth become more sensitive and your gums recede after treatment – this is normal and a sign of healing as the tissues become less inflamed. You may also experience a fever from toxins being flushed into your bloodstream during treatment. As time goes on, you will notice your gums start to look less swollen and red and more shiny and pink. They will also stop bleeding when you brush. For treatment to work, you will need to follow a rigorous home-care regime of brushing, flossing and special mouthwashes. Some people will experience side-effects from the mouthwash such as temporary alteration of taste and stained teeth. These side effects are temporary and are reversed after treatment is complete.

Good periodontal health requires life-long attention – your disease can reactivate if you fail to keep up with good home care or don't get regular professional cleans to remove calculus. Remember, you can't remove calculus with a toothbrush no matter how good your oral hygiene is. How often you need cleans will vary depending on your level of disease and risk status – but will usually be between three and six monthly. Like all areas of dentistry, good gum health is a joint effort between you and our dental team.