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Dealing With Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease is the category given to those infections that occur in and around the teeth, specifically, the gums. [Periodontal disease](#) typically begins as gingivitis and will progress to periodontitis if left untreated.

Periodontal disease can develop around any tooth. When plaque starts growing along the gum line, over time it can spread below the gums. As the bacteria that are part of plaque begin releasing toxins, the gums become irritated. In response to the irritation, the body initiates an immune response and attacks itself.

Specifically, the body begins destroying the tissues and bones that provide the underlying support for the teeth. With the support structure compromised, gums and teeth can separate, creating pockets which then start getting infected.

Those pockets will keep growing deeper as long as the condition isn't treated. Once teeth start loosening, there's nothing else that can be done except to extract the affected teeth.

As mentioned above, periodontal disease is most often caused by poor dental hygiene. However, there is another bad habit that can lead to gum disease – cigarette smoking.

The relationship between cigarette smoking and periodontal disease has been studied extensively and the relationship is real: those who smoke greatly increase their risks of developing periodontal disease.

Genetics has been shown to play a role in its development, too. If periodontal disease is known to run in the family, early intervention can mean the difference between keeping teeth intact and losing teeth.

Wildly fluctuating hormones during puberty and pregnancy have been shown to increase the risks of developing periodontal disease, and so has stress. When you're stressed, your body has a more difficult time fighting infection, including that which forms in the gums.

Certain medications might negatively impact your oral health which is why it's important that your dentist know all that you are taking, along with the dosage. Tooth clenching or grinding can accelerate the rate that the tissues that support your teeth weaken, which can lead to periodontal disease.

Diabetes and certain disorders of the immune system can contribute to problems with the gums as can poor nutrition.

Periodontal disease treatment begins with an effort to scrape away the plaque and tartar that have built up in the root surfaces. This process helps remove the irritating toxins, too. Once the deep pockets have been thoroughly cleaned, surgery usually can be avoided if ongoing, regular maintenance is performed.

When surgery is necessary, the type will depend on the severity of the periodontal disease. Pocket depth reduction reduces the size of the pockets that have developed, making it easier to keep plaque out.

The pockets are cleaned and then surgically tightened around the tooth. Regenerative procedures attempt to regenerate the tissues and bone that have been lost.

Crown lengthening involves surgically removing and reshaping gums so that more of the tooth is visible. Soft tissue grafts can cover up exposed tooth roots, reducing sensitivity. This procedure can also build up gum tissues that have been lost.

[Cav's Tip: While periodontal disease isn't good, it's not the end of the world and there are lots of ways you can take control of the situation and get your breath under control. [Get the details here.](#)

And seeing your dentist regularly is the first step in preventing many dental problems. But sometimes finding affordable dental care can be difficult. [Find out how to save at least 50% on your Dental Bill with a Discount Dental Plan](#)

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