



Gum Disease (Periodontal Disease)



Overview

For a healthy mouth, you need healthy gums. Your gums protect the bones and tissues that support your teeth. But bad oral hygiene opens your gums to an infection we call "gum disease." And this leads to serious dental problems.

Causes

When you don't brush and floss properly, plaque builds up along your gum line. This irritates your gums. They become infected, swollen and tender. That's "gingivitis" – the first stage of gum disease. If not treated properly, you'll develop a more serious form of gum disease called "periodontitis." Your gums begin to pull away from your teeth, and the bones and tissues that support your teeth are damaged and destroyed. You can lose your teeth.

Symptoms

Symptoms of gum disease can include red, swollen or tender gums. They may bleed when you brush or floss. You may have sores in your mouth, and bad breath. You may have pus between your teeth and gums, and your gums may begin to recede. This makes your teeth look longer than normal. Eventually, your teeth may loosen and shift out of place. They may fall out.

Treatment

Gum disease is treated with better oral hygiene and with professional care. Your dentist, dental hygienist or periodontist will remove the buildup of plaque and tartar on your teeth. If your gum disease is advanced, you'll need to have your teeth cleaned below the gum line. Then, you'll get tips for proper home care. You may need to make other lifestyle changes to keep your gums healthy. Your dentist will create a care plan that's right for you.