

PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Information Source: American Academy of Periodontology (last modified 6/03)

Description: Periodontal means "located around a tooth." Periodontal disease can refer to any disorder of the gums or other supporting structures of the teeth. The most common and often initial form of periodontal disease is inflammation of the gums, called gingivitis. Untreated gingivitis proceeds further with increasing inflammation and involvement of the membranes around the bases of the teeth and erosion of the underlying bone. This is an advanced stage of periodontitis (also known as pyorrhea) in which the bone supporting the teeth begins to erode. Periodontal disease is a major cause of adult tooth loss. Problems in the mouth often are reflections of deficiencies or underlying disorders in the body. Bleeding gums may signal a vitamin C deficiency; dryness and cracking at the corners of the mouth may indicate a deficiency of vitamin B2 (riboflavin); dry or cracked lips can be the result of an allergic reaction; raw, red mouth tissue can be a sign of stress; a smooth, reddish tongue can indicate anemia or poor diet; sores under the tongue can be an early warning sign of mouth cancer. Regular dental check-ups can detect these conditions early.

Symptoms: Red, inflamed gums that bleed easily when exposed to very minimal injury such as with flossing or brushing the teeth, or eating hard foods such as raw apples. In some cases there is pain, but gingivitis is usually painless.

Incidence: Periodontal disease is second only to the common cold as the most prevalent infectious ailment in the U.S. The prevalence of periodontal disease increases with age, ranging from 15% at age ten to more than 50% at age fifty.

Causes: Poor oral hygiene, i.e., insufficient brushing and flossing, is a major cause of gum disease. Food particles and bacteria, left for even a short time along the gum line, form plaque, which hardens on the teeth and irritates the gums. Irritated gums bleed and eventually start to recede, creating pockets next to the teeth that collect even more particles. Before long, the plaque starts attacking the roots of the teeth and the jawbone. Poor nutrition, eating the wrong foods, sugar consumption, chronic illness, blood disease, glandular disorders, smoking, drugs and excessive alcohol consumption make an individual more likely to develop periodontal disease. It can also be related to a deficiency of vitamin C, bioflavonoids, calcium, folic acid, or niacin. Periodontal disease can be made worse by missing teeth, food impaction, malocclusion (problems with biting surface), tongue-thrusting, tooth-grinding, and toothbrush trauma. Gingivitis may be one of the first signs of an underlying systemic problem or disease such as diabetes or leukemia, heavy metal toxicity, or allergies.

Treatments: The best treatment is prevention with daily removal of plaque through brushing and flossing, routine cleaning by a dentist every six months (more frequently if the disease is already occurring), and eating a proper diet. Any underlying systemic problems must also be treated.

Nutrients

Supplement Dosage Comments

Coenzyme Q10	100 mg. daily	Increases tissue oxygenation
Goldenseal		See under Herbs, below
Vitamin C with Bioflavonoids	4000-10,000 mg. daily in divided doses	Promotes healing, especially of bleeding gums. Bioflavonoids retard plaque growth.
Calcium and Magnesium	1500 mg. daily 750 mg. daily	Helps prevent bone loss around the gums. Work with calcium.
Vitamin A plus Natural beta-carotene	25,000 IU daily for 1 month, then reduce to 10,000 IU daily. If you are pregnant, do not exceed 10,000 IU daily.	Needed for healing of gum tissue. An antioxidant used by the body to manufacture vitamin A as needed.
Vitamin E	Start with 400 IU daily and increase slowly to 1,000 IU daily. Also open a capsule and rub the oil on the gums 2-3 times daily.	Needed for healing of gum tissue.
Grape seed extract	As directed on label.	A powerful antioxidant that works with vitamin E to ward off cancer.
Vitamin B complex	50 mg. 3 times daily, with meals.	Needed for proper digestion and healthy mouth tissues.
Zinc	50-80 mg. daily. Do not exceed a total of 100 mg. daily from all supplements.	Enhances immune function. Needed to prevent infection and promote healing. Use zinc glutonate lozenges for best absorption.

Herbs:

- Goldenseal destroys the bacteria that cause periodontal disease. Place a dropperful of goldenseal extract in your mouth, swish it around for three minutes, then swallow. For inflamed gums, place a dropperful of the extract on a piece of gauze or pure cotton and place this on the inflamed area. Do this immediately whenever mouth sores or inflammation starts. In severe cases, it may take three to five nights for sores to heal. *Caution:* Do not take goldenseal internally on a daily basis for more than one week at a time, as it may disturb normal intestinal flora. Do not use it during pregnancy, and use it with caution if you are allergic to ragweed.
- Applying aloe vera gel directly to inflamed gums eases discomfort and soothes the tissues.
- Clove oil is good for temporary relief of tooth and/or gum pain. Rub a drop to two of clove oil on the affected area. If the oil is too strong, it can be diluted with a drop or two of olive oil.

Recommendations:

- Floss your teeth daily. In addition, use a product called Stim-U-Dent (available in drugstores) between meals to clean and stimulate the gums. Do this faithfully every day.
- Use a soft natural-bristle toothbrush. Be sure to brush your gums and tongue as well as your teeth. If your gums are inflamed, run very hot water over the toothbrush to soften it before brushing, and brush gently until healing is complete.
- Change toothbrushes every month to keep the disease in check. Keep your toothbrush clean between uses. Bacteria lives on toothbrushes.
- Open a capsule of vitamin E and rub the oil on inflamed gums. This is very healing and helps to alleviate soreness.
- For relief of toothache pain until you can get to your dentist, apply ice to the gums. Clove oil can also be helpful (see under Herbs, above)
- Consume a whole foods diet with emphasis on as many fresh fruits and vegetables as possible (five to seven servings daily), meat, high-fiber foods, and whole grains to provide the teeth and gums with needed exercise and supply the body with the vitamins and minerals essential for dental health.
- Drink sufficient filtered water, especially first thing in the morning and last thing in the evening, to help cleanse the mouth.
- Adequate vitamin C intake is particularly important for the prevention of gingivitis and pyorrhea. Vitamin A seems to control the development and general health of the gums; a lack of this vitamin often results in gum infection. Vitamin A is also necessary for healthy tooth development in children.
- Avoid sugar and refined carbohydrates. Sugar causes plaque buildup and inhibits the ability of white blood cells to fight off bacteria.
- Try using a dental rinse called Plax to help loosen plaque. Listerine also helps to remove plaque.
- Avoid taking antibiotics. Try using goldenseal first; it works faster and has no side effects (see under Herbs, above).

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Considerations:

- Smokers are two to four times more likely to suffer periodontal disease than nonsmokers.
- Severe cases of periodontal disease may necessitate surgery to remove the infected tissue from the gum and reshape the bone.
- Certain illnesses, such as diabetes and several kinds of blood disorders, create a higher risk for developing gum disease.
- Some people appear to have a genetic predisposition to the bacteria that cause gum disease.
- Electric toothbrushes, such as Braun or Oral B systems, help to remove plaque.
- Regular dental checkups are important in detecting oral cancer. If oral cancer is caught early, nine out of ten people survive.
- There is a tablet you can purchase at drugstores that shows areas you missed when brushing your teeth. Chew a tablet after brushing, then brush until the color is gone.
- Dry mouth, a condition in which there is not enough saliva in the mouth, can promote tooth decay and periodontal disease. Dry mouth problems increase with age. It can also be caused by alcohol consumption or by drugs, especially those for high blood pressure, depression, colds, and allergies. Diabetes is also associated with dry mouth. The best treatment for dry mouth is to draw more moisture from the salivary glands by chewing carrots, celery or gum, sipping liquids, chewing ice chips, and breathing through the nose.

Compiled by the Burton Goldberg Group

Our office, Cajon Dental Group believes in non-surgical periodontal therapy. With guidance and your participation, you can achieve optimum oral healthcare that contributes to overall well being.

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