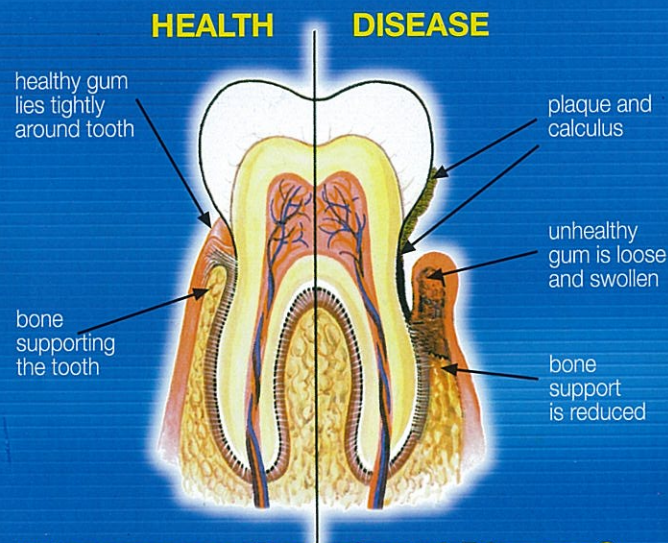


What are the signs of Periodontal Disease?

- Redness of the gums
- Bleeding from the gums
- Puffy or swollen gums
- Bad breath
- Spaces appearing between the teeth
- Longer looking teeth due to receding gums
- Vague discomfort like itchiness or aches
- Loosening and shifting of the teeth

In the early stages, none of the above signs or symptoms may be noticed.

Pain would only be present in an advanced stage of the disease or in an acute infection. It is therefore important to visit the dentist regularly so that early detection and treatment is possible.



What causes Periodontal Disease?

Dental plaque

This is a sticky, almost invisible layer of bacteria that accumulates on teeth, especially around the gum margins.

Dental plaque cannot be removed by rinsing; it has to be brushed away. If it is not removed, it can harden and become calculus (tartar). Calculus can only be removed by a dentist by scaling.

How does dental plaque cause disease?

The bacteria in plaque produce toxins (poisons) that cause the gums to become red and swollen (inflammation). This is the beginning of periodontal disease. As the disease progresses, the toxins proceed to destroy the underlying bone that supports the tooth. Eventually, the tooth will become loose or shaky. There may be little or no pain while all this is going on.

What can I do to prevent the disease?

- Ask your dentist to show you the correct way of brushing and flossing your teeth.
- Practice the correct methods at home, daily. This will remove the plaque that causes the disease.
- Visit your dentist at least once every 6 months to have your teeth scaled and polished. This removes the hardened plaque or calculus that cannot be removed by brushing.
- Ask your dentist to examine your teeth for early signs of gum disease.
- If you smoke, quit! Smokers are more likely to suffer from periodontal disease.
- If you have diabetes, have it well controlled. Uncontrolled diabetes makes you more prone to periodontal disease.

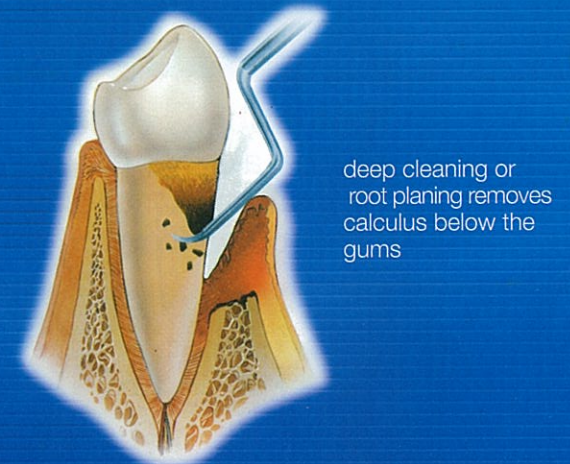
What can the dentist do for me?

Apart from 6-monthly scaling and polishing, your dentist can also carry out a detailed periodontal examination of your mouth. This includes:

- checking the colour and shape of your gums for early signs of disease
- detecting the presence of calculus both above and below the gums
- taking X-rays of your teeth to check for any loss of bone around the teeth
- measuring and recording the degree and distribution of bleeding from the gums, accumulation of plaque; the mobility of the teeth and the depth of gum pockets

Subsequent periodontal treatment would be based on results of this detailed examination. Treatment may involve multiple sessions of deep cleaning or root planing to remove calculus below the gums.

In advanced cases, treatment may involve surgery. The measurements that your dentist has recorded will be used to check your progress and monitor the disease.



What are gum pockets?

When the gums become diseased, it will loosen from the tooth and the underlying bone. This loosening gives rise to a crevice between the tooth and gum. A crevice that is deeper than 3mm is not normal and is called a gum pocket.



Probe measuring depth of pocket

Gum pockets are very difficult to keep clean. Root planing by the dentist can help to reduce the depth of the pocket. This will make it easier for you to keep the teeth clean and the gums healthy.

Remember

Periodontal Disease is a chronic disease. Good home care and regular cleaning by your dentist can control the disease.

A Dental Health Education Leaflet by



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Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease, more commonly called gum disease, is the most common dental problem that affects adults today.

It is a progressive disease that gives little or no pain in the early stages.

The disease attacks the gums and bone that support the teeth and, in the advanced stages, may result in loss of teeth.

The best way to cure or control the disease is to:

- Recognise the signs of the disease
- Practice daily oral hygiene to prevent it
- Visit your dentist regularly to prevent or treat the disease

