

Periodontal Disease

The Cause of Periodontal Disease

Plaque produces acids that can irritate the gums. Plaque can build up overtime making new plaque harder to remove under and around the gums and resulting in loss of the attachment of gum tissues to teeth. If untreated, this can destroy gum, bone, and ligaments that support the teeth, allowing the infection to progress to bone loss. This breakdown is painless, so it is possible for you to not even be aware.

Stages of Periodontal Diseases

1. **Gingivitis:** The gums are red, tender, swollen and bleed easily. This is the beginning stages of periodontal disease and is still reversible.
2. **Periodontitis:** Gums become detached from the teeth, creating pockets. Root structure is being directly exposed to plaque and is more susceptible to decay. The teeth may become more sensitive to temperature and touch.
3. **Advanced Periodontitis:** There is little to no attachment of gum tissue to tooth structure. Unless treated, the affected teeth may become mobile and will fall out or require removal by a dentist. This type of periodontitis is rarely curable.

Factors contributing to periodontal diseases

- Plaque (poor oral hygiene)- the #1 factor
- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Poorly fitting bridges, malocclusion, or defective restorations
- Excessive biting forces on your teeth, such as clenching or grinding
- Poor diet
- Pregnancy or use of oral contraceptives
- Systemic diseases such as AIDS or diabetes
- Medications-anti epilepsy, cancer therapy steroids, ca channel blockers and others

Prevention

- ✓ Good oral hygiene- properly brush and floss your teeth
- ✓ A well-balanced diet
- ✓ Regular preventive dental visits- where calculus below the gum line can be removed by only a dentist or hygienist

Warning Signs:

- Gums may be tender, red, swollen and bleed easily
- Gums have pulled away from the teeth
- Pus between the teeth and gums when the gums are pressed
- Persistent bad breath or bad taste
- Permanent teeth that are loose or separating
- Changes in you bite or the fit of your partial denture.

* It is common to not have any symptoms associated with periodontal disease. Most people do not experience any pain due to periodontal diseases so it is important to have regular dental checkups, including a periodontal exam.

Diagnosis and Treatment

During your checkup Dr. Amie Rockow-Nelson will examine your gums for periodontal problems. An instrument called a periodontal probe will measure the attachment level of your gums. The depth of pockets will help her evaluate your oral health. X-rays may be taken to determine if any bone has been destroyed.

Methods of treatment of periodontal diseases depend upon the type and progression of disease. In early diagnosis a thorough cleaning by the hygienist and good home care may reverse the progression of periodontal disease. Heavy calculus may be removed by root planning and scaling. Scaling is the removal of plaque and calculus deposits beneath the gumline and root planning is smoothing the root surface. This promotes healthy gum tissue to heal next to the teeth. In advanced stages of this disease, surgery may be necessary.

Maintenance

You don't have to lose teeth to periodontal diseases. Brush, and floss daily, eat a balanced diet and see your dentist regularly. Following an active period of therapy you may need to visit the dentist's office every 3 months to be sure your periodontal disease is staying under control.