

## Periodontal Disease: Keeping Your Dental Health

A bright healthy smile can make you feel and look good throughout your entire life. All it takes to keep your mouth healthy is your own daily effort combined with regular professional care. Contrary to popular belief, periodontal disease is the chief cause of tooth loss in adults today. To maintain good oral health, it is essential for you to take the initiative to prevent this serious, and often hidden disease.

### What is Periodontal Disease?

There are several types of periodontal disease. All are started by a bacterial infection that destroys the gums, bone, and ligaments supporting the teeth. Periodontal disease progresses silently, often without pain or obvious symptoms that would alert you to its presence. If you notice any of the following early warning signs, see Dr. Rockow-Nelson immediately. Early warning signs include:

1. Gums bleeding when you brush or floss.
2. Red, swollen, or tender gums.
3. Detachment of the gums from the teeth.
4. Pus that appears from the gumline when the gums are pressed.
5. Teeth that have become loose or changed position.
6. Any change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite.
7. Chronic bad breath or bad taste.

### How does it develop?

Plaque, a colorless, sticky film, produces acids that over time can irritate the gums causing them to become red, tender, swollen and to bleed easily. Unremoved plaque hardens into calculus, which makes the removal of new plaque more difficult. Eventually the irritants in plaque will destroy the tissues that attach the gums to the teeth.

This causes the gums to pull away from the teeth, forming a small pocket that will become filled with more plaque. If the irritants are not removed, they will destroy the bone supporting the teeth. At this point, the disease now referred to as periodontal disease has caused irreversible damage.

### Can Periodontal Disease Be Treated or Controlled?

Yes, except in the most advanced cases. The treatment for this disease depends upon how far the disease has progressed. Dr. Rockow-Nelson has listed an overview of diagnostic methods and treatments available.

**Periodontal Charting:** is used to determine the extent of the disease process and is an important tool for successful home care. A periodontal instrument is used to measure the space between the tooth and the gum. As periodontal disease progresses, a pocket will develop in this area. During periodontal charting, a “map” can be produced showing the location of each pocket.

**Bacterial Monitoring:** If destructive bacteria are found, we will assist you in reducing the level through correct brushing, flossing, and irrigating with a concentrated anti-bacterial solution.

**Root Planing:** is a way to remove calculus deposit along the root surface. This treatment will not only remove the irritant, but also smooth the root surface making it difficult for new bacteria to adhere. This will help the tissue to reattach to the tooth, thus reducing the periodontal pocket. Along with root planing, curettage is the removal of the infected tissue that lines the periodontal pocket. This process promotes new healthy tissue cells to form and enable the gums to heal.

**Surgery:** In advanced periodontal disease, surgery is necessary. The goals of surgery are to remove calculus from the deeper pockets, to reduce the pocket and arrange the soft tissue into a shape that will be easier to keep clean. If surgery is recommended for you, we work closely with a specialist that will provide you additional care.