Periodontal Disease

Advanced Gum Disease

What is periodontal disease?

Periodontal disease is an inflammatory disease which affects the teeth and gums. Treatment of periodontal disease is indicated when conditions begin to affect the health of your gums and the support of your teeth. Signs of periodontal disease include red or swollen gums. Gum recession may also be present due to periodontal disease. As the disease progresses, the bone holding the teeth into the jaw will also be affected, leading to loose or displaced teeth and eventually lost teeth. This disease not only affects your ability to chew or speak well, but also affects your smile. Treatment of periodontal disease is a team effort between the dentist and yourself. Successful treatment of periodontal disease requires proper treatment and support.

The periodontium of the teeth consists of four tissues: gums (gingiva), bone (alveolar bone), periodontal ligament (ligament holding teeth to bone), and cementum (covers the root and attaches to the periodontal ligament). Periodontal disease is a bacterial infection that affects these tissues. Many different diseases may affect these supporting tissues, plaque-induced inflammatory diseases make up the majority of issues affecting these tissues. These diseases are broken into two main classifications: gingivitis or periodontitis. Gingivitis affects the gingival tissues while periodontal diseases affect all of the supporting tissues. Gingivitis is the less serious of the diseases, and may never progress to periodontal disease, however, it always precedes periodontitis.

Bacterial plaque (dental plaque) is the main cause of gingivitis. Plaque is a sticky film that attaches to the teeth. Plaque consists of food particles and different types of bacteria. Plaque is constantly forming on your teeth throughout the day. The bacteria found in the plaque may produce toxins that irritate the gums. This irritation may lead to the gums becoming red and bleeding easily. If the irritation is not resolved, it may cause the gums to detach from the teeth and form pockets (spaces between the gum and tooth). If plaque is not removed routinely, it may become hard and form a rough, porous substance called calculus (tartar). Calculus can form both above and below the gums.

Gingivitis may progress to periodontitis; if this happens the supporting tissues that hold teeth in place begin to deteriorate. This loss of tissue may lead to loose teeth and even loss of teeth.

Periodontal & Implant Therapy

Dr. Jeffery S. Jensen, DDS, MS • 250 W 200 N Suite 103 • Kaysville, UT 84037
www.jensenperio.com | 801-336-4724 | info@jensenperio.com
Bacteria and an overly aggressive immune response affect the outcome of periodontitis.

Many times, periodontal disease is painless and asymptomatic. This makes it dangerous. This makes it imperative to use proper home oral care practices and to regularly visit the dentist to ensure early diagnosis.

How is periodontal disease diagnosed?

Periodontal disease is diagnosed by your dentist during a periodontal examination. This type of exam should be part of your regular dental check-up.

The dentist uses a periodontal probe (dental instrument) to measure the pocket or space between the tooth and the gum tissue. Typically, a healthy space will measure less than 3 mm and will not bleed. As periodontal disease progresses, the space or pocket will become deeper.

Your dentist will use multiple pieces of information (pocket depths, amount of bleeding, inflammation, tooth mobility, x-rays, etc.) to make a diagnosis.

How is periodontal disease treated?

Periodontal treatment methods are dictated by the type and severity of the disease. Following an exam, the dentist will recommend the appropriate treatment.

The goal of periodontal treatment is the disrupt and remove bacterial plaque and calculus. In addition, the dentist tries to control inflammation in the gum tissues. These goals can be accomplished in both non-surgical and surgical ways. Non-surgical therapy consists of scaling and root planing (deep cleaning). This is done under local anesthesia (numbing). After scaling and root planing, you will return to the dentist for a re-evaluation. Surgical treatment consists of exposing the roots of the teeth for access to remove the irritating plaque and bacteria.

Your dentist may also use other therapy in conjunction with traditional treatments such as: antibiotics, mouthrinses, lasers, or other therapies.

Home oral care is also very important in treating periodontal disease. Your dentist will provide an individualized plan for home oral care. Daily home care helps control the formation of dental plaque and calculus.

What happens after my treatment?

Once your periodontal treatment has been completed, your dentist will recommend that you
have regular maintenance cleanings (periodontal cleanings). These cleanings will be tailored to your needs and may be as frequent as 4 times a year. At these appointments, the pocket depths will be measured to ensure that they are healthy. Plaque and calculus that is difficult for you to remove on a daily basis will be removed from above and below the gum line.

**Are antibiotics used for gum disease?**

Antibiotic treatment may be used in combination with traditional periodontal treatment. They may also be used alone in certain cases to help reduce bacteria before and/or after some periodontal procedures such as bone grafting or gum grafting.

Antibiotic treatments come in several different types, including oral systemic forms and topical gels which are applied directly into the gum pockets. Antibiotics have been shown to be effective when treating acute periodontal infections, refractory periodontal disease, and juvenile or aggressive forms of periodontitis.

Antibiotics can be prescribed at a low dose for long term use, or as a short term medication to prevent bacteria from returning to the gum tissues.