



Gum (Periodontal) Disease

If your dentist has told you that you have periodontal (gum) disease, you're not alone. An estimated 75% of all American adults have some form of gum disease.* Fortunately if caught early, the beginning stages can be reversed through optimal oral hygiene at home and professional care at the dentist.

If left untreated, however, gum disease can affect more than just your mouth. Evidence links advanced stages of gum disease to serious health issues like [diabetes](#) and heart disease. During [pregnancy](#), gum disease may increase the risk of premature birth and low birth weight.

What is periodontal (gum) disease?

Gum disease is a common but largely preventable condition where the bacteria in plaque cause inflammation of the gums and affect the supporting areas around the teeth. As it progresses, it can become painful and lead to very serious problems, including tooth loss. There are two main types:

- Gingivitis – A mild form of gum disease, marked by red, swollen and/or bleeding gums.
- Periodontitis – A serious condition causing gums to recede from the teeth, creating pockets that become infected. As it worsens, the body's immune system may respond by destroying the tissues and bone that hold the teeth in place.

Symptoms of gum disease

A "silent" disease, its symptoms may go unnoticed in the early stages.

- Persistent [bad breath](#)
- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Easily bleeding gums
- Pain or trouble chewing
- Tooth sensitivity
- Receding gums
- Loose teeth

Treating gum disease

The goal of gum disease treatment is infection control. Your treatment plan will depend upon the stage of your gum disease and other

factors. For all stages, a combination of daily home care and professional dental treatments is essential.

A routine dental cleaning can be effective in reversing the early stages of gum disease. If the disease has progressed, your dentist may recommend a deep cleaning, also known as scaling and root planing. In severe cases of gum disease, surgery may be necessary.

Avoid gum disease by practicing optimal oral hygiene

Though gum disease is a very common condition, it's also largely preventable. Gum disease is caused by inflammation, usually as a result of a buildup of bacteria and plaque, which can develop when these substances are not adequately cleaned from the teeth. Frequent brushing, flossing and rinsing according to proper technique is essential to preventing gum disease. [Follow our tips for how to properly clean your mouth, teeth and gums.](#)

Learn more:

[Oral health care and prevention](#)

[Why gum disease makes it harder to control diabetes](#)

Sources:

[*Dispelling Myths About Gum Disease: American Academy of Periodontology: 2010](#)

[Periodontal \(Gum\) Disease: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments: National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research: September 2013](#)

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