

Patient information about gum disease, periodontitis.

Gum disease, periodontitis, explained

Periodontitis, also known as gum disease, is an infectious disease caused by bacteria that destroy the gum and later the bone, leading to loose teeth and eventually tooth loss.

Periodontitis manifests when bacteria in the oral cavity are not removed regularly, causing a selection of tissue destructive bacteria that break down the tooth supportive structures.

Bleeding and red and swollen gums are a sign of periodontitis, gum disease. Smoking reduces the bleeding despite the presence of serious disease and can camouflage the disease.

Diabetes and smoking leads to a higher risk of developing periodontitis.

Periodontitis on the other hand also has a negative effect on diabetes and heart conditions leading to higher risk of complications from these medical conditions.



Periodontitis, gum disease, is preventable

The most important way to avoid periodontitis is by brushing twice daily and making sure to brush well on the gums and to use interdental brushes to remove dental plaque between the teeth.

Corsodyl or another chlorhexidine mouth wash can be used between brushing for a further bacterial reduction.

It is also important to attend regular dental check ups and seeing a hygienist for a scale and polish to remove dental calculus (tartar) above and below the gum-line.

The dentist can detect early stages of periodontitis by a clinical and radiological examination and regular check ups can allow for early stages of periodontitis to be detected.

The dentist and dental hygienist can give advice and instruction with regards to good brushing habits and techniques.

How periodontitis is treated

The dentist or dental hygienist can do a professional cleaning, debridement, of the tooth and root surfaces. This is sometimes done best during a surgical procedure to gain better access to the root surfaces.

If optimal debridement has been completed and the oral hygiene is superb the treatment can sometimes be supplemented with a course of antibiotics.