

Explanation of Gum Disease and Associated Health Risks

As of today, I have been informed that I have gum or *periodontal* disease. In Greek, “peri” means *around* (think periscope) and “odont” means *tooth* (think orthodontics). Broadly defined, periodontal disease is inflammation and infection affecting the gums, bone and supporting tissues around the teeth.

In addition to inadequate brushing and flossing, periodontal disease can be caused by smoking, diabetes, stress, medications, illness, hormonal or systemic changes, and genetics (it can run in your family). You can have periodontal disease even with good oral hygiene.

A person may be unaware that he or she has periodontal disease. Common symptoms include deep pockets surrounding the tooth (3mm or less is healthy – the dentist or hygienist measures these pockets with a dental instrument), bone loss (observable on dental x-rays), puffy gums, loose teeth and bleeding while brushing or flossing.

Dentists characterize periodontal disease in four categories:

- Type I – Gingivitis
- Type II – Early Periodontitis
- Type III – Moderate Periodontitis
- Type IV – Advanced Periodontitis

Like most diseases, periodontal disease is progressive. Left untreated, it will get worse and can cause serious health effects both inside the mouth and throughout the body.

INSIDE THE MOUTH

Periodontal disease (and not decay) is the leading cause of tooth loss among American adults over the age of 35. Unless you follow your dentist’s recommendations, you may lose some or all of your teeth. Other complications may include bad breath, loose teeth and bone loss (which may impact your future ability to wear dentures or have implants inserted).

THROUGHOUT THE BODY

The U.S. Surgeon General and other studies report that periodontal disease has been linked to heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other ailments.

UNCHECKED PERIODONTAL DISEASE CAN LEAD TO SERIOUS ILLNESS AND EVEN BE LIFE THREATENING!

Periodontal disease may be permanent in nature and require lifelong care. In some cases, you can treat but never “cure” the disease.

Patients with no periodontal issues typically should see their dentist every six months. Patients with periodontal disease, however, often need treatment every three or four months.

I understand that it is extremely important for my oral and overall health to see the dentist and treat my periodontal disease strictly as recommended.

Patient Signature & Date

Witness