

Gum Disease Guide (Periodontal Disease)

What Is Gum Disease?

Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, is an infection of the tissues that support the teeth. It is mainly caused by plaque buildup along and below the gum line.

Types of Gum Disease

Gum disease develops in stages. **Gingivitis** is the early stage and affects only the gums, while **periodontitis** is a more advanced stage that can damage bone and lead to tooth loss.

Causes of Gum Disease

The primary cause of gum disease is poor oral hygiene, which allows plaque to accumulate. Other contributing factors include smoking, diabetes, hormonal changes, certain medications, and genetic susceptibility.

Signs and Symptoms

Common symptoms include red or swollen gums, bleeding during brushing or flossing, persistent bad breath, gum recession, and loose teeth in advanced cases.

How Gum Disease Progresses

If plaque is not removed, it hardens into tartar. This leads to inflammation of the gums and gradual destruction of the supporting tissues and bone around the teeth.

Risk Factors

Risk factors include smoking, poor oral hygiene, dry mouth, stress, chronic illnesses, and lack of regular dental care. Older adults are at higher risk of advanced gum disease.

Diagnosis

Dentists diagnose gum disease through clinical examination, measurement of gum pockets, dental X-rays, and review of medical history. Early diagnosis helps prevent permanent damage.

Treatment Options

Treatment depends on severity. Gingivitis may be treated with professional cleaning and improved oral hygiene, while periodontitis may require deep cleaning, medication, or surgical procedures.

Prevention of Gum Disease

Gum disease can be prevented by brushing twice daily, flossing regularly, avoiding tobacco, and visiting the dentist for routine checkups and cleanings.

Gum Disease and Overall Health

Research shows a link between gum disease and systemic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Maintaining gum health supports overall well-being.

Gum Disease in Children and Teens

Although less common, gum disease can occur in children and adolescents. Proper oral hygiene education and early dental visits help prevent gum problems.

When to See a Dentist

A dentist should be consulted if gums bleed frequently, appear swollen, or if there is persistent bad breath or loose teeth. Early treatment improves outcomes.

Educational Disclaimer

This content is provided for educational purposes only. It does not replace professional dental diagnosis or treatment. Always consult a licensed dentist for personalized care.