

Periodontal Disease



Clarence Street
DENTAL Group

It has been recommended by your dentist and hygienist that you come more frequently for your cleanings as they are concerned about the health of your gums. If left untreated, there is likely to be a progression of your condition. The good news is that we are here to help you and can provide you treatment and guidance for the best dental care for you.

What is gum disease?

Periodontal or gum disease begins with plaque. Plaque is an invisible, sticky film composed mostly of bacteria that forms continuously on the teeth. Although you remove plaque every time you brush and floss your teeth, it re-forms quickly, usually within 24 hours. If the plaque is not removed daily, it will harden into tartar (calculus). The longer plaque and tartar remain on your teeth, the more irritated and inflamed the gums become. The tartar forms a rough surface where the plaque can easily accumulate causing gum irritation and swelling around the base of the teeth. This inflammatory condition damages the fibres that hold the gums tightly against the teeth creating spaces known as periodontal pockets. These pockets fill with plaque, tartar, and bacteria. In time, the pockets become deeper as more bacteria accumulates under the gum tissue. Eventually, the bone supporting the tooth is destroyed, resulting in tooth loss.



How do I know if I have periodontal disease?

You may not know that you have periodontal disease unless you have noticed puffy or bleeding gums. These are the most common signs that people will notice. Other indications may be that your teeth feel loose or you notice that you have bad breath or an unpleasant taste in your mouth that won't go away.

Your hygienist will determine the health of your gums by measuring multiple areas around each tooth. These determine your stage of periodontal disease.

How do I fix this?

There are 3 main ways to treat periodontal disease as there are 3 stages of progression:

1. **Gingivitis:** This is the first stage and the mildest form of periodontal disease. Plaque accumulates at the gumline and if not removed, it hardens into calculus. The plaque builds up and bacteria in the plaque releases toxins. This causes the gums to become red, swollen, and bleed easily. You may notice that your gums look red and puffy and can be uncomfortable. At this stage, the disease can be treated.

Treatment: A complete and thorough cleaning is required. As well, your hygienist may give you special instructions about the proper way to brush and floss. Meticulous home care and regular visits to your dentist will ensure that the disease is caught at its earliest stage, when it is the easiest to treat.

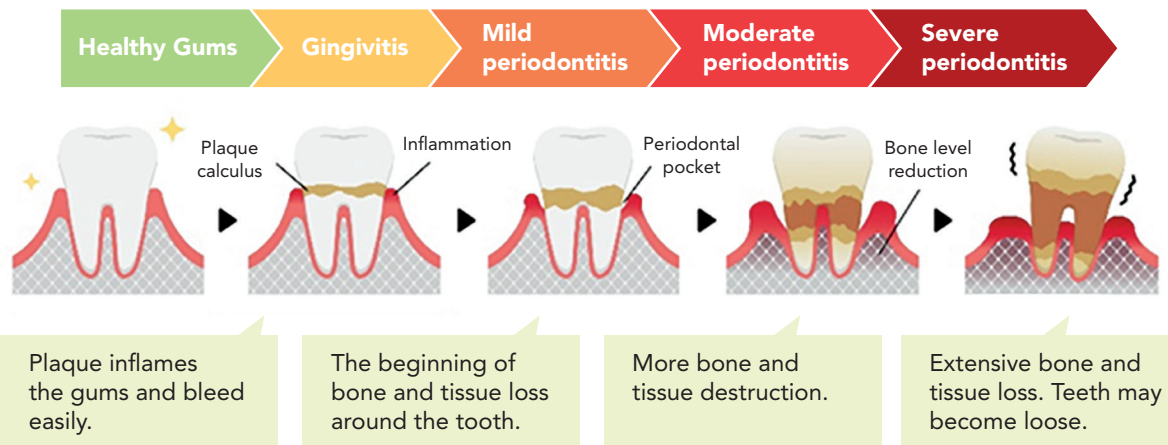
2. **Mild Periodontitis:** When gingivitis goes untreated for too long, it can turn into periodontitis. The symptoms become far more serious and can cause conditions such as receding gums and deeper pocket depths. The gums are more tender and bleed much easier.

Treatment: A more pro-active treatment is recommended which will involve visiting your dental hygienist on a more frequent basis, usually every 3 to 4 months. This will allow the hygienist to do a deep and thorough scaling above and below the gumline removing the tartar and calculus build up that you cannot access. Your periodontist may also recommend combining an antibiotic therapy in conjunction with your deep scaling/root planing appointments to help reduce and target the bacteria that the hygienist is removing. Again, the best remedy is regular and diligent home care.

3. **Moderate to Advanced Periodontitis:** The pockets around the teeth deepen as more tissue is destroyed and bone is lost. Gums become even more red, puffy and they bleed easily. As the disease progresses, the teeth begin to loosen or become misaligned.

Treatment: This is the stage of the disease in which you will be referred to our periodontist who will discuss surgical options with you. The most common type of surgery for this stage of periodontitis would involve folding back the gum tissue to remove the disease-causing bacteria. The roots of the teeth are smoothed to limit areas where the bacteria can hide therefore helping the gum tissue to reattach to healthy bone. The gum is then secured back into place.

The stages of periodontal disease



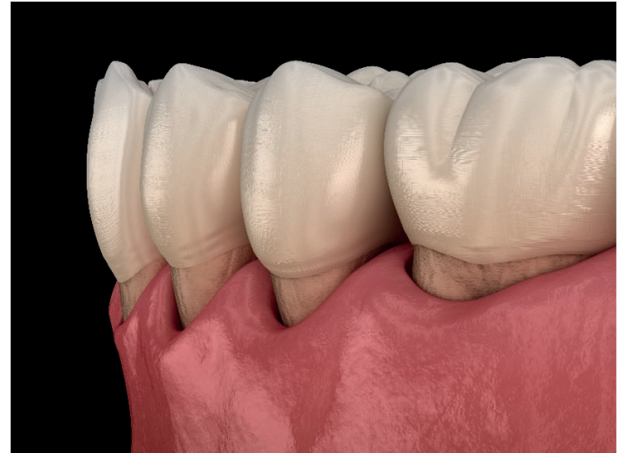
How to Prevent Gum Disease:

To help reduce your chances of needing periodontal surgery, you need to maintain good oral health care at home. This includes brushing, flossing, and rinsing 2-3 times daily. It is also recommended for you to visit your hygienist every 6-9 months for cleanings and check-ups. When you come regularly for your cleanings, you should have little to no pain. When you get into deeper stages of periodontal disease, you may find that you will feel more sensitivity. If you experience this, the dentist can give you freezing to make your visits more comfortable.

Gingival Recession:

When the margin of the gum tissue surrounding the tooth wears away, more of the root of the tooth is exposed, which is called recession. Most people are not aware that they have recession as it is a gradual progression that causes your tooth to look longer and then become more sensitive. Some of the causes of recession are listed below:

1. Aggressively brushing your teeth causing the enamel to wear away and your gums to pull back (recede).
2. Poor dental hygiene such as improper brushing or not brushing enough, or not flossing and rinsing with mouthwash can allow plaque to harden into calculus. Your gums will pull away from the calculus causing recession.
3. Smoking, whether it is tobacco or marijuana are both factors that can cause recession. They leave a sticky plaque on your teeth which causes your gums to recede.
4. Clenching and grinding your teeth puts a lot of force on your teeth that can cause recession.
5. Teeth that are not straight or properly aligned have areas where plaque is harder to remove. This condition can also cause excessive force on the gums and bone causing recession.
6. Tongue and lip piercings can rub against the tissue causing recession.



How do I treat recession?

The treatment for recession can be as simple as more frequent cleaning appointments with your hygienist. This will allow your hygienist to clean below the gumline removing the tartar and calculus build up that you cannot access. The alternate option to this is periodontal surgery.