



THE BLOCKLEY PARTNERSHIP

Working together for your dental health

Gum Disease

Gum disease attacks the gum tissues and the bone beneath them, both of which hold the teeth in place. Gingivitis is the first stage of gum disease, when just the soft tissues are affected. Periodontitis is the later stage when the bone under the gum becomes infected as well. Most of the population suffer from gum disease to varying degrees. It is one of the main causes of tooth loss in adults.

What causes gum disease?

The simple answer is plaque! This is a sticky film of bacteria which naturally forms on the teeth. The bacteria attacks the area where the gum and teeth meet creating a “pocket” causing the gum to become red and swollen. Also, the fibres which hold your teeth to the bone, and the bone itself, can be attacked. If untreated, enough bone can be lost for the teeth to loosen and this may result in the teeth being lost. It can also be very painful.

The disease is usually slow to progress and it can take a number of years for it to reach a severe stage. In its early stages, it can be difficult to spot any obvious problem. Treatment of the disease becomes more difficult as it progresses.

What can you do about it?

First, visit your dentist to find out about the health of your gums. Treatment by your dentist may be required initially. From then on, the maintenance of healthy gums is the same as prevention of the disease in the first place. This means thorough cleaning of the teeth daily and regular visits to the dental hygienist. Poor fillings, dentures and incorrect biting forces on teeth make gum disease progress faster. These factors can be corrected if necessary. Dietary modifications may also help.

Gum disease can progress for many years without there ever being any pain. In some cases gingivitis becomes painful with the formation of ulcers on the gums and a bad smell and taste in the mouth. At this stage gum destruction can be very rapid.

[If your gums bleed, it means that you have gum disease.](#)

It is not healthy for gums to bleed either spontaneously, on eating or with brushing. Healthy gums do not bleed. Smoking will exacerbate the gum disease and can reduce the amount of bleeding, making the disease less obvious. Ask your dentist to examine your gums if you are concerned. All the tissues in the mouth are examined at routine dental checkups.

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