



## PERIODONTAL THERAPY



Commonly known as gum disease, periodontal disease is a family of related chronic inflammatory diseases that are all bacterial infections. The word “periodontal” means “around the tooth”. Each tooth is embedded in the gum and attached by connective tissue to bone. Healthy gums are pink, smooth, and firm. Your bone and gum tissue should fit around your teeth like a turtleneck around your neck. Gum disease is caused by bacteria, which produce the sticky, soft, colorless substance known as plaque.

Potential warning signs that can signal a problem for developing periodontal disease :

- *Gums that bleed easily*
- *Red, swollen, tender gums*
- *Gums that have pulled away from the teeth*
- *Persistent bad breath or bad taste*
- *Permanent teeth that are loose or separating*
- *Any change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite*
- *Any change in the fit of partial dentures*

As plaque accumulates and hardens into tartar on the surfaces of the teeth, bacteria releases toxins that irritate the gums, causing the gums to swell, turn red, and bleed easily. Plaque that is not removed can harden into tartar or calculus. This build-up of tartar worsens the condition, causing the gums to pull away from the

teeth forming spaces called “pockets” around the teeth. Over time these pockets become deeper, providing a larger space for bacteria to live. These deeper pockets result in tissue and bone loss. Eventually, if too much bone is lost, the tooth or teeth will become loose and will need to be extracted.

### CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS:

Specific species of bacteria must be present for periodontal disease to develop, but usually other risk factors must be present as well. In fact, 80% of people with gum disease have at least one other risk factor that makes them susceptible. Multiple factors are frequently involved. For example, stress, poor diet, and viral infections all play a role in periodontal disease. Aside from bacteria, other major risk factors are:

- *Genetics*
- *Medical conditions*
- *Smoking*
- *Medications*
- *Hormonal changes*
- *Stress*
- *Heart disease*
- *Diabetes*



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### TREATING PERIODONTAL DISEASE:

Periodontal therapy is necessary to arrest the progression of gum disease. The most common and a more conservative approach to treating periodontal disease is non-surgical treatment. After treatment, you should receive more frequent cleanings to maintain control of the disease. You must also have to develop good oral hygiene at home and try to reduce other risk factors for gum disease. Successful treatment requires the commitment of the dentist, hygienist, and patient.

Non-surgical treatment, or “scaling and root planning” is a deep cleaning treatment performed on your teeth and gums using local anesthesia. During treatment, the dentist or hygienist uses a vibrating ultrasonic device to scrape tartar from the visible part of the tooth. To get the harder-to-reach tartar beneath the gum line, a curette is used to probe and clean out the pockets formed around the tooth. At the same time, any diseased periodontal tissue may be removed with use of the Diode laser. The laser will kill the bacteria that cause your gum disease and increase healing of your gums around your teeth, helping revive and rejuvenate the attachment of your gum tissue. During or after treatment, antibiotics like Arestin may need to be placed inside the gum to kill the remaining bacteria that the scaling and root planning could not remove. After treatment, Dr. Mia and her hygienist recommends using an antibacterial gel like Perioscience to help heal the gum and CTX4 or Chlorohexidine rinse to further reduce the harmful bacteria that caused the gum disease.

### KEEPING GUMS IN SHAPE:

Even the best periodontal treatment is for naught if you do not follow through with regular brushing and flossing. The American Periodontal Association recommends more frequent cleanings called “periodontal maintenance” every 3 months after scaling and root planning procedure. Tartar builds up within 2 months and sometimes quicker in certain patients. It is important that this tartar is removed before it builds underneath the gum again. During these visits Dr. Mia’s hygienist will examine your gums, measures your gum pockets, and remove new plaque and tartar.

A big part of this ongoing maintenance program is practicing good daily dental care at home. All of these factors will help control or stop the progression of the disease. Keep in mind though, scaling and root planning does not guarantee healing of all problem areas. There is a possibility that some areas may need to be retreated to achieve optimal health. If, after all these attempts, tissues continue to break down, you may be referred to a Periodontist.

Please refer to our Oral Hygiene Instructions, Tips and More page to learn brushing, flossing techniques and other aids to help prevent and control gum disease. If you have questions regarding gum disease or if you have gum disease and would like for us to help you treat it, please call Smiles by Mia at (703) 323-1300 today!