

RISK FACTORS

While bacteria in plaque ultimately stimulate the inflammatory response leading to gum disease, there are many factors that can affect your risk for developing gum disease. These factors include the following:

- **Genetics** - You may be predisposed to the disease.
- **Smoking** - One of the most significant risk factors in the development and progression of gum disease is smoking.
- **Age** - 70 percent of Americans over age 65 have gum disease.
- **Hormones** - Fluctuations during puberty and pregnancy can contribute to gum disease.
- **Medications** - Oral contraceptives, anti-depressants, and certain heart medicines can increase susceptibility to gum disease.
- **Diseases** - Other systemic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, may contribute to gum disease.
- **Obesity and poor nutrition** - A poor diet can compromise the body's immune system, making it harder to fight the bacteria associated with gum disease.
- **Stress** - Stress can have the same effect as a poor diet on the immune system, hindering its ability to fight the bacteria associated with gum disease.
- **Teeth grinding** - Excessive force on the supporting tissues of the teeth, exerted during episodes of grinding or clenching, can speed up the rate of periodontal tissue loss.

ARE YOUR GUMS AT RISK?

HOW MANY RISK FACTORS DO YOU HAVE?

Knowing your risk factors and discussing them with your periodontist are important steps in preventing, diagnosing, and treating periodontal disease. Visit perio.org to assess your risk.



Taking care of your gums shouldn't be an afterthought; they are the foundation for good periodontal health.

Visit perio.org for more information on gum disease and to find ways to Love The Gums You're With

Understanding
Your Periodontal
Health.



WHAT IS PERIODONTAL DISEASE?

Periodontal disease, more commonly referred to as gum disease, is a bacterial, chronic inflammatory disease of the gums that can destroy bone and connective tissue. It affects 65 million people – that's one out of every two American adults – yet few people know about the disease.

More than 500 species of bacteria can be found in dental plaque. Plaque and bacteria that live below the gum line can irritate and inflame the gums, leading to the two types of periodontal disease:

- **Gingivitis:** The mildest form of periodontal disease, gingivitis can be caused by inadequate oral hygiene. It is characterized by red, swollen gums.
- **Periodontitis:** More advanced gum disease, or periodontitis, occurs if gingivitis is not managed, oral hygiene is poor, and/or you have a genetic predisposition. Periodontitis can cause gums to separate from the teeth, forming pockets that become infected with bacteria. If left untreated, periodontitis can damage the attachment of the teeth to the bone and can eventually lead to tooth loss.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF GUM DISEASE?

The early stages of gum disease are often painless, and even moderate stages may cause little or no pain. Consequently, you may not know you're at risk. The most common symptoms of gum disease include the following:

- Red, swollen, tender, or bleeding gums
- Receding gums that cause teeth to look longer than before
- Pus between the gums
- Persistent bad breath

HEALTHY GUMS, HEALTHY BODY

Periodontal disease can affect more than just your mouth. In fact, many people don't know that your gum health can affect your overall health. The effects of gum disease include the following:

- Tooth loss from destruction of the hard and soft tissues that support the teeth.
- Bone destruction caused by food or residual sugars left between the teeth that are broken down by bacteria in the mouth.
- Increased inflammatory response in the body, which is associated with other systemic diseases, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO KEEP

YOUR GUMS HEALTHY?

You and your gums are connected for life. There are easy and effective ways to prevent gum disease, and they can be as simple as keeping up with your oral hygiene routine. Follow these steps for a life-long commitment to healthy gums:

- **Brush Your Teeth** – Brushing at least twice a day and even after meals helps reduce the amount of food trapped between teeth and gums. Tongue-brushing also assists in the removal of excess bacteria from the mouth.
- **Floss** – Flossing between the teeth and along the gum line is the most effective way to remove debris and plaque that a toothbrush cannot reach.
- **See a Periodontist** – A periodontist, a dental specialist with advanced training in the diagnosis and treatment of gum disease, will give you a comprehensive periodontal evaluation. He/she can examine every tooth for potential problems above and below the gum line.

WHAT ARE YOUR TREATMENT OPTIONS?

There are many treatment options for periodontal disease depending on its severity. The good news is periodontal disease is highly preventable and, in most cases, reversible, especially if it's caught early. So what are your options?

Non-surgical treatments include the following:

- **Scaling and root planing** – Cleaning the surface of the roots of teeth to remove plaque, tartar, and bacteria from periodontal pockets. Additionally, a systemic antibiotic may be prescribed to assist in treatment.
- **Antimicrobial medications** – For some cases, local antibiotics can be applied beneath the gums to suppress or kill the bacteria adjacent to the roots.

Surgical treatments for advanced cases include the following:

- **Periodontal pocket reduction** – Folding back the affected gum tissue, removing the bacteria, and securing gums back into place.
- **Gum graft surgery** – Transferring tissue from the roof of the mouth to the exposed root of the tooth. This procedure reduces gum recession, bone loss, and temperature sensitivity.
- **Regenerative procedures** – Regenerating lost bone and tissue can reverse some of the damage caused by periodontal disease.

TALK TO A PERIODONTIST

Each patient is unique. Your periodontist will provide a specialized treatment plan based on your specific case to help you love your gums for life.