

What is Periodontal Disease?

The word periodontal literally means “around the tooth.” Healthy gum tissue fits like a cuff around each tooth. Where the gum line meets the tooth, it forms a slight v-shaped crevice called a pocket. In healthy teeth, this space is usually three millimeters or less and doesn’t bleed.

Periodontal diseases are infections that affect the tissues and bone that support teeth. Generally, the more severe the disease is, the greater the pocket depth and bone loss. The enlarged pockets allow harmful bacteria to grow and make it difficult to practice effective oral hygiene. Left untreated, periodontal diseases may eventually lead to tooth loss. This disease has also been shown to be a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and pre-term low birth weight babies.

What causes periodontal disease?

The mouth is filled with countless bacteria. Periodontal disease begins when certain bacteria in plaque produces toxins and enzymes that irritate the gums and cause inflammation and bleeding. The resulting inflammation, which may be painless, damages the attachment of the gums and bone to the teeth.

Did you know that...?

- Periodontitis affects each person differently; much like each person responds differently to a common cold.
- Specific factors contribute to disease susceptibility and to a person’s response to treatment. For example, genetics, smoking, stress and decreased immune systems can all affect the disease.
- Periodontitis, once initiated, does not necessarily progress steadily; rather it progresses in “episodes” of attachment loss. A person undergoing a particularly stressful period of time can exacerbate the disease.
- Specific bacteria are the causative agents of periodontitis.
- A person infected with periodontal disease is actually responsible for the destruction of the bone surrounding teeth due to an enzyme produced by the body when the disease is active.
- Periodontitis may be a risk factor for systemic disease, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and low birth weight babies.

How do we know when your treatment has been successful and it is time to start maintenance appointments?

- No bleeding
- No increase in pocket depth
- Gingival collar is tight around tooth
- Minimal volatile sulfur compounds—fewer harmful bacteria in your mouth measured with our Halimeter.
- Minimal tooth mobility