

## Periodontal Disease or Gum Disease

Periodontal disease attacks the gums and the supporting bones of the teeth. Periodontal actually means "around the tooth". Periodontal disease can usually be identified by swollen, red, and bleeding gums. The cause of periodontal disease generally starts with a buildup of plaque. Plaque is a thin sticky film of bacteria, saliva, and food particles that festers on the surface of teeth. If this plaque is not sufficiently removed, it turns into tartar (calculus). When both plaque and tartar are not eliminated, they can begin to damage the surrounding gums and bone. It is suggested that as many as four out of five people have some degree of periodontal disease and do not even know it. People will not be aware of it because the disease is generally painless in the beginning stages.

Periodontal disease is the number one cause of dental decay and tooth loss, but researchers also suggest that periodontal disease might be linked to other health ailments such as bacterial pneumonia, diabetes, stroke, and cardiovascular diseases. Right now researchers are determining what the relationship between the bacteria and inflammation associated with periodontal disease are to these systemic diseases and conditions.

By choosing a balanced diet, by promoting a proper oral hygiene program, and by continuing scheduled oral health visits you can help reduce your risk of developing periodontal disease.

One of the early signs and symptoms of periodontal disease are bleeding gums. Even when vigorous pressure is applied for brushing or when you floss, your gums should never bleed. Loose teeth is another symptom of periodontal disease. This can be caused by weakened periodontal fibers or by bone loss. Periodontal fibers connect and support the tooth to the bone. Persistent bad breath caused by excess bacteria in the oral cavity can be a sign of gum disease. Other symptoms include loss of bone that might create new spacing between the teeth as well as receding gums around the tooth. Also, pus can develop around the teeth which will be a sign that infection is present. Finally, gums might show periodontal disease through red and swollen gums, plus they might become tender to touch or there might be mild to severe discomfort.