

Periodontal treatment is a dental procedure in which the teeth are cleaned above and below the gums. The intended benefits of the procedure include reducing/stopping active periodontal disease, aiming to prevent the loss of teeth. Gingivitis and periodontal disease are the 2 most common forms of gum disease we see in practice.

What is gingivitis?

Within our mouths, we have hundreds of thousands of bacteria and other microscopic organisms; this is called plaque/biofilm. These are highly adherent and sticky, and are all over our teeth, gums, cheeks, lips and tongue. Even people who brush and clean their mouths really well, still have these bacteria. These biofilms are present in most natural places, such as water lines, hulls of boats and even on the seaside!

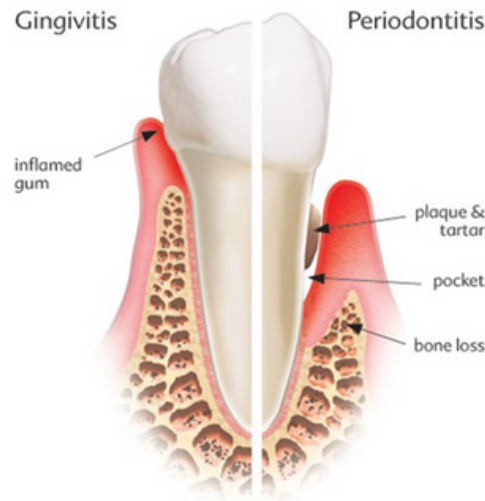
By keeping the mouth clean with an electric or manual tooth brush, floss or interdental brushes, we can keep biofilms to a minimum. However, if oral hygiene is lacking, biofilms build up rapidly. This thicker, older biofilm will contain nastier bacteria which will trigger the bodies inflammatory responses and lead to bleeding gums and irritation, known as gingivitis. This is a reversible gum condition.

What is periodontitis?

Periodontal (gum) disease is caused by bacterial toxins which damage the supporting structures around the teeth causing irreversible damage to the supporting bone and premature tooth loss. The gum fibres eventually break down causing the teeth to become mobile. If we clean our teeth better and see the dentist/hygienist at the stage of gingivitis, most of the damage to the gum tissue and bone is preventable.

There is evidence to suggest an association or increased risk of untreated gum disease leading to a potential greater risk of heart disease, Alzheimer's, artificial joint failure, prosthesis failure and complications in pregnancy.

For more information, please go to patient pages for The British Society of Periodontology
www.bsperio.org.uk



For any enquiries or to make an appointment,
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How do I get this?

Most patients who develop periodontitis have a certain degree of genetic predisposition. However, this alone will not lead to periodontitis.

Environmental factors will have a substantial role to play. These can include poor oral hygiene, smoking, stress, uncontrolled diabetes or other health issues.

Can it be cured?

Gingivitis is reversible if good oral hygiene is maintained at home, regular visits to the dentist or hygienist for a check-up, oral hygiene advice and picking up on problems at an early stage will help.

Periodontitis cannot be cured but managed with professional help. Periodontitis is a more advanced stage of gum disease. Bone loss and loss of supportive tissue is irreversible. However, with regular professional care and excellent self-performed oral hygiene, this can potentially be stabilised and future bone loss and tooth loss can be prevented.

Will I lose my teeth?

If periodontitis is left untreated, this can lead to loss of all supportive structure around the affected teeth. Due to lack of bone, the tooth can become mobile and sensitive.

What sort of treatment can I have?

The treatment proposed is set out to ensure the condition is controlled, stabilised and monitored closely to prevent recurrence and further deterioration to your gum and bone health, in order to prevent tooth loss and help in the retention of natural teeth, dentures, crowns, bridges and implants.

If the disease becomes unstable again, indicated by bleeding when brushing, you may need to go through the treatment again.

Treatment of periodontal disease is often divided into stages. This varies from person to person.

Initial consultation

A detailed clinical examination consisting of gum pocket depth measurements, bleeding scores, mobility of teeth, gum shrinkage, detailed medical and social history that is relevant to progression of disease. Discussion of diagnosis and prognosis of the disease, discussion of treatment options, cost, likely outcomes and a long term plan. Throughout the duration of the course of the treatment, you will be responsible for an appropriate home care regime as advised by the clinician in order to get the very best outcome from any treatment carried out.

Non surgical periodontal therapy

Treatment for periodontal disease is usually carried out with local anaesthetic. A combination of water scalers and hand instruments to remove tartar, bacterial plaque and toxins above the gum and on the root surface of the tooth. This may require multiple appointments depending on the severity of the disease.

Maintenance

8-10 weeks after your last appointment, your gum health will be reassessed. The detailed pocket chart will be repeated and a treatment plan going forward for maintenance will be made. We may need to repeat the non surgical treatment in the areas not responding, or refer you to a specialist.

Reassessment

If all gum pockets are within a range that you can sufficiently maintain at home and the gum disease looks stable, we will move you towards the maintenance phase. This is where you will see the hygienist every 3 months. At this stage, you are still expected to look after your gum health to the highest standard. Your clinician will support you with detailed advice and modifications to home care, as well as cleaning your teeth and gums.

Risks, benefits and alternative options

Expected Complications:

- Numbness lasting a few hours
- Possible discomfort, swelling or bruising lasting a few days
- Increased sensitivity to hot/cold/sweet
- Gum recession and exposure of the root surface

Uncommon risks and complications:

- Trauma to other parts of the mouth
- Possible risk of infection

Rare risk and complications

- Trauma to tissues underneath the tooth including bone, sinus and nerves supplying other teeth
- Allergic reaction to something used during the procedure

Benefits

- Periodontal treatment ensures adequate steps are taken to prevent further destruction to the supporting tissues around the teeth
- To reduce some of the causes of periodontal disease to a level manageable by your own immune system
- Prevents widening of the spaces between teeth and drifting of the teeth
- Ensures that further progression is prevented and monitored closely

Alternative options

- Referral to a specialist in this field
- Regular hygienist visits as a cosmetic option - full resolution of the disease will not be resolved by this
- Treating the tooth in a different way, such as extraction

Refusing treatment

- This will lead to a high risk of further loss of gum strength, ultimately leading to tooth loss