

# preventing gum disease

## Your hygienist visit

The hygienist will assess your gums and teeth, checking for any swelling or inflammation and for any bleeding. Measurements of where the gum attaches to the tooth may also be taken (pockets). The hygienist will then carefully remove the tartar using manual or ultrasonic instruments. Removing the tartar makes the teeth easier to keep clean, as its rough surface tends to attract more plaque. The hygienist will then polish the teeth leaving them smooth and clean. If a lot of tartar is present, two or more visits may be necessary.

If gum disease has become advanced, a special programme for removing deep deposits from the root surface may be required. This is called root planing or debridement. It may be necessary for the dentist or hygienist to anaesthetise an area of your mouth to make it more comfortable whilst this is done. In severe cases a slow-release antibiotic gel may be prescribed to help stop the harmful bacteria from causing further damage.

At the end of your visit the hygienist will advise when you need to return to keep your teeth and gums healthy. Most people need a hygienist visit every six months, or more frequently if they have a problem. This appointment can usually be booked in conjunction with a regular dental examination. Recent research has shown that people who regularly see the hygienist experience less dental decay and require less dental work in the long term.

## Home care

Treatment will only be successful if you maintain an oral hygiene routine. Your hygienist will give you a home care routine to suit your individual needs. In some cases this may involve a radical change in how you care for your teeth.

## Review

All dentists and hygienists are committed to help prevent gum disease. Your dentist will examine your teeth and gums at each check-up appointment and advise you of any treatment that may be necessary. Most patients will normally see the hygienist on a regular basis.

## Did you know?

The following patients have an increased risk of developing gum disease:

- Smokers (these patients are also at risk from mouth cancer)
- Patients with uncontrolled diabetes
- Pregnant women

Gum disease and plaque build-up are the biggest causes of bad breath.

We stock a range of dental products. Should you require any information on any of the products available please do not hesitate to ask a member of our staff.



INFORMATION  
FOR PATIENTS

How to take care of your teeth and gums

# gum disease

## What is gum disease?

Gum disease is defined as inflammation of the tissues that support the teeth. The effect of this inflammation, over a period of time, is to cause the gums to recede. Recession occurs not only on the outside but also invisibly on the inside where the gum meets the tooth. In this way recession can cause pockets to develop between the teeth and gums. Once pockets develop, bacteria accumulate inside them and accelerate the disease process. Diseased or inflamed gums bleed when they are brushed or flossed. Healthy gums do not bleed.

Gum problems usually begin without any initial symptoms so it is important to have both your teeth and gums checked regularly. Once problems start they can progress at an increased rate, with damage occurring over a relatively short period of time.

When gum disease is in the early stages it is called gingivitis. When inflammation reaches the bone it is called periodontitis. This can eventually result in tooth loss if left untreated, as the bone supporting the teeth is progressively lost.

## What causes gum disease?

Gum disease is caused by an accumulation of plaque on the teeth. Plaque is a term that describes the film of bacteria which is constantly forming on the surface, and between, teeth. If left in place, plaque causes tooth decay and gum disease. When plaque has been present for several days it can harden to form tartar (calculus). This deposit typically builds up behind the lower teeth and deep between the teeth.

## How can I prevent gum disease?

Healthy gums are the support for healthy teeth. Lifelong protection for teeth and gums starts with regular dental examinations and hygiene visits. 80% of adults have gum disease to some degree and everyone needs advice on cleaning and maintenance.

Thorough tooth cleaning each day is the most important measure to prevent plaque from building up. Brushing can remove plaque on the front and back surfaces of the teeth and special aids such as floss, tape or interdental brushes can remove plaque from between the teeth. Your hygienist will demonstrate brushing techniques, the use of floss and other devices and will help choose the right products. Once tartar has formed, it can only be removed by a hygienist or dentist.



## Susceptibility

Not everyone has the same susceptibility to gum disease. Some people have a very strong natural resistance and do not experience severe periodontal disease even when their oral hygiene is poor. Other people, although perfectly healthy, have a very low resistance to gum infection and have to achieve virtually perfect dental hygiene to prevent it. Most people are in between these extremes.

## The hygienist

Dental hygienists are professionally trained to work with the dentist to provide individually tailored treatment and advice. They play an important role in oral health and are particularly focused on the prevention of gum disease.