

INFORMATION CONCERNING PERIODONTAL DISEASE

WHAT IS PERIODONTAL DISEASE?

Periodontal disease is an infection that attacks the supporting structures of the teeth . . . namely the bone, ligaments and gums that support the teeth in the jaws. In its early stage it is called *gingivitis* (gum inflammation); the more advanced stage is known as *periodontitis*.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Your dentist is highly trained in diagnosing oral problems but you should check yourself and watch for the first symptoms of periodontal disease.

Early Stage:

1. Bleeding gums
2. Swollen or puffy gums
3. Reddish discoloured gums
4. Tender gums
5. Bad breath
6. Bad taste

Later Stage:

7. Loose gums
8. Loose teeth
9. Gum recession
10. Change in tooth position

It is important to note that *pain is not a common early symptom*. For this reason, periodontal disease can often go undetected at the early treatable stages. If untreated, this condition can however become debilitating, disfiguring, and painful in the advanced stages.

WHAT CAUSES PERIODONTAL DISEASE?

Periodontal disease is caused by **PLAQUE**. Plaque is a sticky film composed of many different types of bacteria that form continuously on the teeth. If not removed, the plaque gradually hardens into calculus (tartar). As the infection progresses, loss of supporting bone occurs and spaces develop and deepen between the gums and the teeth. These spaces, called periodontal pockets, allow plaque and calculus to accumulate underneath the gum. It becomes progressively more difficult for you and your dentist to clean as the pockets get deeper. If the infection progresses unchecked, teeth will be lost.

PREVENTION

A central theme in our approach to periodontal disease is prevention through education. We will help you to evaluate your own dental health and guide you with a personalized oral hygiene program to control the factors which cause periodontal disease.

TREATMENT

The **FIRST PHASE** of treatment is to eliminate as much as possible the cause of the disease and allow the tissues to heal. This primarily involves thorough removal of plaque deposits by you and professional removal of calculus deposits above and below the gumline. Additional therapy may include bite adjustment and specialized appliances.

The **SECOND PHASE** of treatment may be recommended if the periodontal pockets are too deep to allow proper plaque and calculus removal. This phase includes surgical procedures aimed at removing otherwise inaccessible plaque and calculus and reducing pocket depths, thus allowing adequate access for cleaning and maintenance of periodontal health.

The **THIRD PHASE** of treatment is preventive maintenance. This involves a lifetime cooperative effort by both you and us to preserve the health that we have achieved together.

The success of our treatment is dependant on several important factors including:

- a) the severity of your presenting periodontal problem
- b) your level of disease susceptibility
- c) your cooperation with the recommended therapy.

We hope that this information on periodontal disease will be of assistance to you.