

Periodontal Disease – Gingivitis, Gum Disease, Bone Infection and Receding Gums

Periodontal Disease has been described as the most prevalent of all human illnesses. In fact, Periodontal or Bone Disease is the number one reason adults lose their teeth. While almost everyone suffers from at least one form of the disease, it's entirely preventable! However, if left untreated, the disease is progressive, affecting the gums, the bone supporting the teeth, and eventually the entire body's immune system.

We used to think that Periodontal Disease was a normal condition. It wasn't until 1972 that dental medicine understood the cause of gum and bone disease. Then in 1982, the methods to effectively manage the disease were established. It wasn't until after 2005 that methods to eliminate the disease were introduced.

Periodontal Disease is inflammation of the tissue supporting the teeth. It usually begins with oral bacteria accumulating into a biofilm and organizing to produce acids and chemicals toxic to your body. These chemicals irritate the soft gum tissue surrounding your teeth. This mildest form of Periodontal Disease is called Gingivitis. Swollen, loose, red and bleeding gums are all signs of Gingivitis. This form of the disease is the easiest to eliminate. For a patient who is otherwise healthy, removing the biofilm will allow your gums to completely heal, usually within twenty-four hours.

If left untreated, Gingivitis can progress to Periodontitis. This more severe level of the disease is characterized by bone loss around your teeth. While it's easy to think that the bacteria and biofilm are directly responsible for this stage, any bone loss is actually a result of your body's immune system. As your gums swell during the Gingivitis stage, the biologic balance changes deep inside the gum surrounding your teeth. Instead of the "friendly" oxygen-breathing bacteria, which normally inhabit each gum collar, more aggressive non-oxygen breathing bacteria develop as the predominant strains. These strains of bacteria each have the ability to cross your skin barrier, and they actually enter into the gum flesh. The resulting infection triggers a cascade of immune system chemicals. These immune-response chemicals are the cause of bone deterioration. Bottom line, if your gums are swollen enough to support the aggressive bacteria and you allow enough of the destructive strains to develop, your body fights off the infection, even at the expense of your bone.

Only within the past ten years have medicine and dentistry realized the true dangers of Periodontal Disease. The infection of aggressive non-oxygen breathing bacteria has been found to create inflammation throughout your body. Long-term gum infection has been linked to increased risks of Coronary Heart Disease, Stroke, Diabetes, some Cancers and even Premature Birth.



Fortunately, all forms of Periodontal Disease are preventable. At each stage of the disease, significant reduction of bacteria and biofilm helps “reset” your gum health system and allows the normal biologic balance to reform around your gums and teeth.

In the Gingivitis stage, this might mean meticulous removal of all hard and soft bacterial deposits on your teeth. If your gums are severely swollen, and especially if you have already lost bone around your teeth, elimination of the aggressive non-oxygen breathing bacteria is critical.

After removing all biofilm, hard bacterial debris, and eliminating the non-oxygen breathing bacteria, any swollen gum defects must also be eliminated. This helps prevent the bacteria and biofilm from redeveloping. It may require laser therapy, surgical cleaning of the gum tissue around the teeth, or even surgery involving removal of diseased bone around your teeth. Once your condition has stabilized, meticulous homecare is necessary to prevent reinfection of vulnerable areas.

As a Center for Dental Medicine, SandlinDDS is one of only a hundred practices nationwide who use a proven non-surgical treatment protocol for all stages of gum disease. Traditional surgical and non-surgical methods do not adequately eliminate the aggressive non-oxygen breathing strains of bacteria. Instead, the best indication for future gum loss and needing repeated surgery is having a previous surgery! We now understand that treatments developed in the 1980’s do not eliminate the disease. They only attempt to slow the progression of the disease. At Sandlin DDS, we are excited to offer treatment of Periodontal Disease using methods shown to eliminate the cause of infection, and those which have been shown to prevent the return of the disease in the majority of all patients.

Dr. Sandlin

References:

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