

GUM DISEASE

Periodontal Disease (Gum Disease) is a disease of the gums and bone that surround and support teeth. There are a number of causes of this:

- ▶ Genetics. If your mother, father or grandparent have had the disease then it is likely that you are susceptible to it too.
- ▶ Smoking is a major cause of Periodontal Disease
- ▶ Poor diet.
- ▶ Poor oral hygiene allows the build up of plaque and tartar. Plaque is a sticky film like jelly that contains bacteria, food debris and saliva.
- ▶ Not seeing your dentist or hygienist for over a year.

If plaque is not removed every day, it builds up along and under the gum line. Here it produces toxins (poisons) and hardens (forming tartar), This inflames the gum and can cause the gum to come away from the tooth forming a space around it called a pocket. The bacteria are then able to move into this pocket and slowly dissolve the bone that supports the tooth which eventually loosens the teeth.

THIS PATIENT WAS TREATED FOR GUM DISEASE FIRST, FOLLOWED BY INVISALIGN TREATMENT TO STRAIGHTEN THE TEETH SO THAT THEY WERE EASIER TO CLEAN AND MAINTAIN. THIS TOOK 15 MONTHS IN TOTAL.



The problem is further complicated when plaque, that has not been cleaned off daily, hardens to form calculus (also known as tartar or scale). Calculus has bacteria in the surface and is too hard to be removed by regular brushing and flossing. To stop gum disease, this calculus must be removed with thorough scaling and cleaning by one of our highly trained dental hygienists. In most cases

you will require a specialist referral and treatment for a successful outcome. Your dentist will advise you if they think specialist treatment is appropriate.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE GUM DISEASE?

In most cases, people do not know they have gum disease until their dentist tells them. Some of the signs are bleeding gums (especially when they brush), bad breath or loose teeth. However, many people have severe gum disease without bleeding, particularly if they are smokers.

Smokers have a much higher chance of gum disease as it makes it easier for the bacteria in the plaque to attack the gums and bone, due to reduced blood flow in these areas caused by the smoke inhalation.

In most cases, gum disease is NOT PAINFUL, so it can cause significant destruction over many years without being recognised. If you are in any doubt, please ask your dentist to check. The earlier the problem is recognised the easier it is to treat successfully.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM TREATMENT

Initial therapy

For this treatment, you will be placed under the care of one of our highly trained dentists or hygiene team or you may be referred directly to the specialist.

The first stage of treatment is usually assessment of the extent of the gum disease in your mouth. This is required to find which areas of your mouth are most severely affected. It will also provide initial measurements against

HOW DO I BEAT GUM DISEASE?

If you have been diagnosed with gum disease then there are five requirements that must be fulfilled to overcome the problem:

- ▶ You must understand the disease - what it is and how to avoid it. This generally requires a separate appointment.
- ▶ You must accept that the control of the disease depends on YOUR actions. Our actions can only assist you. We must work together or the disease will continue to progress.
- ▶ Give up smoking.
- ▶ Lead a healthy lifestyle. Eat a healthy diet, maintain an exercise regime and get enough sleep.
- ▶ You must be prepared to accept our recommendations on the best interval between treatments for you. Unless you have a genuine commitment to this, treatment WILL FAIL.

which improvement or disease progression can be measured. This assessment is thorough and detailed, it will involve measuring the pockets (space between gum and bone) in 6 areas around each tooth in your mouth, as well as radiographic films (x-rays), diet and social analysis. Blood tests may be advised too.

The second stage is deep scaling and cleaning your teeth under local anaesthetic. This involves removal of calculus, plaque and bacteria from the tooth and root surface. This is often below the gum line and sometimes requires a local anaesthetic (numbing) to make the procedure comfortable for you. In most cases this can take up to four visits. If this treatment is to be successful, then it is essential that a very thorough job is performed.

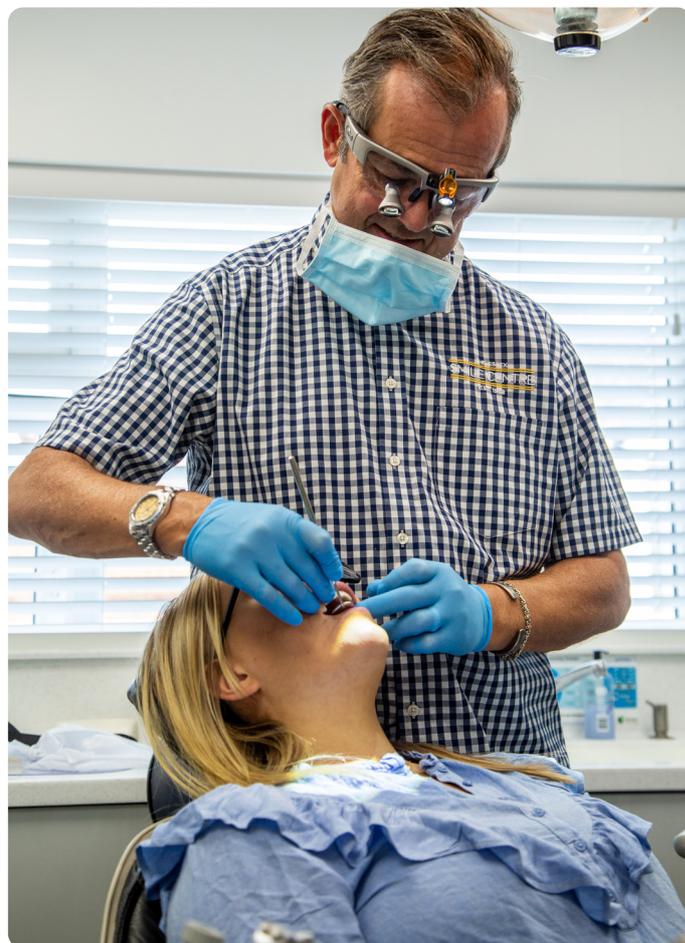
The third part sometimes requires the replacement or reshaping of fillings that may be contributing to your gum disease. If this applies to you, your dentist will explain this to you in more detail.

The final stage is the discussion of techniques you need to use at home to beat this disease. This is usually explained while your scaling and cleaning is being performed, although we may make a separate appointment. This discussion will include specific

cleaning techniques for your mouth, brushing, flossing, inter-dental cleaning devices, mouth rinses, and the use of an electric toothbrush.

Long term therapy

If you have had gum disease in the past, then you are always at a risk of it starting again. For this reason, it is **ESSENTIAL** that you do not miss or delay your regular scale and clean with our dental hygienists or indeed your yearly reviews with our periodontist. After initial therapy, you will be placed on a programme of regular visits, tailored to our assessment of your individual needs. These visits will be every 2 to 6 months depending on your response to therapy and whether you have ceased smoking. These maintenance visits are usually easier than the initial therapy because there has been less time for calculus and plaque to build up. At these visits, we will scale and clean your teeth, reinforce home cleaning techniques, and monitor the progress of your disease. If your mouth is responding well, then recall appointments may be made further apart. If your mouth is not responding well to treatment, we may increase the frequency of visits or consider referral back to the specialist (periodontist).



SIDE EFFECTS

- ▶ Tooth sensitivity to hot and cold and brushing may occur after treatment. This usually subsides within a month of treatment if sensitive toothpaste is used with the spit no rinse rule.
- ▶ Gum shrinkage/recession. This is part of the healing process as the inflamed gums return to their normal shape.
- ▶ Increased risk of decay and wear on exposed root surfaces. Your dentist may recommend daily fluoride treatment to reduce the risk. (high level fluoride toothpaste).
- ▶ The loss of very diseased teeth. Tartar can hold the worst affected teeth in place and once this is removed these can become very mobile and painful.
- ▶ Links with dementia, Alzheimer's, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and stroke. The link between oral health and overall body health is well documented and backed by robust scientific evidence. Despite this fact, only 1 in 6 people realise that patients suffering with gum disease run these increased risks. Usually, bacteria in your mouth are swallowed with food and saliva directly into the stomach where they are killed by the acid pH1. However, gum disease allows the bacteria in your mouth to directly enter the bloodstream by the open capillaries in the inflamed and ulcerated pockets in the gums.

Getting your periodontal disease under control is the foundation to having a healthy mouth. At The Essex Smile Centre, we will not perform any cosmetic treatments unless the periodontal disease is fully resolved and under control.