

Frequently Asked Questions about Gum (Periodontal) Disease - Page 3

By Dr Matthew Fleming & Dr Dana Horng



What are pockets?

Your bone and gum tissue should fit snugly around your teeth like a turtleneck around your neck. When you have periodontal disease, this supporting tissue and bone is destroyed, forming "pockets" around the teeth. Over time, these pockets become deeper, providing a larger space in which bacteria can live. As bacteria develop around the teeth, they can accumulate and advance under the gum tissue. These deep pockets collect even more bacteria, resulting in further bone and tissue loss. Eventually, if too much bone is lost, the teeth will need to be extracted.

Could my periodontal disease be genetic?

Research proves that up to 30% of the population may be genetically susceptible to gum disease. Despite aggressive oral care habits, these people may be six times more likely to develop periodontal disease. Identifying at risk individuals with a genetic test before signs of the disease become apparent, and getting them into early treatment, may help them keep their teeth for a lifetime.

Can I pass my periodontal disease to others?

Periodontal disease may be passed from parents to children and between couples, according to an article in the September 1997 issue of the Journal of the American Dental Association. Researchers suggest that bacteria causing periodontal disease are passed through saliva. This means that when a family or couple come into contact with each other's saliva, they're at risk of contracting the periodontal disease of another family member. When one family member has periodontal disease, it is recommended that all family mem-

bers see a dental professional for a periodontal disease screening.



What can I do to avoid periodontal disease?

To keep your teeth for a lifetime, you must remove the plaque from your teeth and gums every day with proper brushing and flossing. Regular dental visits are also important. Daily cleaning will help keep calculus formation to a minimum, but it won't completely prevent it. A professional cleaning at least twice a year is necessary to remove calculus from places your toothbrush and floss may have missed.

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