



Frequently Asked Questions – Gum Disease

What Is Gum Disease?

Gum disease begins when a film called plaque accumulates on the teeth and calcium from saliva hardens the plaque—this calcified plaque is called tartar or calculus. Certain types of germs that live in this plaque and calculus damage gum tissue. Your body tries to fight this infection with an inflammatory attack, sending white blood cells to the area to destroy the bacteria. This inflammation causes the tissue to bleed easily when you brush or floss. This stage of the condition is called **gingivitis**.

If the infection and inflammation persist the result is a chronic inflammatory condition where, in addition to the gums, ligament and bone around the teeth are destroyed—often with no symptoms. At this stage it is called **periodontitis**.

I feel fine. Why is it important to get my gum disease treated?

The health risks of gum disease go far beyond the loss of teeth. There is a connection between gum disease and a number of serious medical conditions. People with periodontal disease are almost twice as likely to suffer from coronary artery disease, and have nearly twice the risk of having a fatal heart attack. Gum disease has also been linked to other health problems, including respiratory disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, certain cancers, heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, erectile dysfunction, HPV, and pregnancy complications.

What are the symptoms of Gum Disease?

- Gums that are red, swollen, and bleed easily
- Gums that seem to have pulled away from the teeth
- Bad breath or halitosis
- Pus between your teeth and gums
- Teeth that seem to be loose or moving away from one another
- Change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Change in the way your partial denture or implant-supported restorations fit
- Or no symptoms at all!

Does it hurt?

Although the procedure itself can be virtually painless, we may anesthetize the area for the patient's comfort. In this way we can precisely direct the laser for treatment. Post-procedure discomfort is typically minimal and of short duration.

What Are the Risk Factors for Gum Disease?

Well known risk factors for periodontitis include genetics, stress, avoiding the dentist, no brushing or flossing, and some medical conditions. Smokers are significantly more likely to develop gum disease than non-smokers.

