



Some early warning signs include:

- *Bleeding gums*
- *Red, tender, puffy or swollen gums*
- *Pain or tenderness in the gums*
- *Itchy sensation*
- *Teeth that are loose or shifting*
- *Tooth sensitivity*
- *Constant bad breath or taste*
- *Changes in your bite*
- *Changes in the fit of your oral appliance (i.e. partial denture)*
- *Gums that are pulling away from the teeth (i.e. recession)*

If left untreated, periodontal disease can lead to tooth loss. Research indicates that periodontal diseases may contribute to diabetes, respiratory diseases, heart attack, stroke, or be associated with premature childbirth.

### Prevention of Periodontal Disease

- *Good oral hygiene and visiting your dentist regularly can stop the disease's progression*
- *Eating a balanced diet to supply nutrients for good health*
- *Proper use of a toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss and mouthwash*
- *Drinking at least seven glasses of water per day to increase saliva in the mouth*

### Treatments

An evaluation is done using a periodontal probe to measure the depth of the space between the teeth and gums and x-rays are taken to see whether the bone is damaged. Depending on the disease progression, the following treatments are used:

- *More frequent cleaning interval*
- *Scaling is done to scrape off tartar and plaque from the tooth's crowns and roots*
- *Root planing is done to smooth rough surfaces of the root and allow the gums to heal*
- *Surgery may be needed in certain cases to properly treat the disease*

Early detection is important in the treatment of periodontal disease. In addition, you keep dental costs down by preventing further destruction. If you have any questions on periodontal disease, its progression and treatment, ask your dental care provider.

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## About Periodontal Disease

Periodontal is a broad term used to describe various diseases that affect the gums, bone and surrounding structures of the teeth. The 2001 Guinness Book of World Records lists Periodontal Disease as the #1 disease affecting mankind. The most common types of adult periodontal disease are gingivitis and periodontitis. Gingivitis causes bleeding and reddening of the gums. Periodontitis damages the bone and connective tissue that support the teeth.

Gingivitis is inflammation of the gum tissue. This happens when bacteria increases in mass to form a paste-like substance called plaque. Accumulation of plaque and tartar covering the teeth are the beginning stages of periodontal diseases. Tartar is long standing plaque that has absorbed calcium on the tooth surface. Early detection and treatment are your best defense.



## Risk Factors for Periodontal Disease

- *Poor dental hygiene*
- *Poorly contoured fillings or crowns*
- *Poor nutrition*
- *Smoking*
- *Chewing tobacco*
- *High levels of stress*
- *Diabetes*
- *Down's Syndrome*
- *AIDS*
- *Taking certain medications: steroids, oral contraceptives and blood pressure medications*
- *Genetics: children of parents with periodontitis are 12 times more likely to have the bacteria that can lead to periodontal disease*

## Warning Signs and Symptoms of Periodontal Disease

The existence of bone destruction under the gums cannot be visually detected. This makes it especially important to visit your dentist regularly.