

Gum Health

- What is periodontal disease (gum disease)?

Periodontal disease is a condition affecting the tissues around your teeth. It involves the gums and underlying bone that hold and support your teeth in position.

Despite it being one of the most widespread diseases across the world, it is preventable and easily treated when diagnosed early.

Periodontitis is caused by many factors including genetics, medical conditions, smoking and bacteria. Bacteria sticks to your teeth and inflames your gums, making them bleed more easily. This reversible disease is called gingivitis. If these bacteria are not removed, the condition can progress to destroy the attachment of the gum to the teeth and eventually cause loss of supporting bone and ultimately tooth loss. This disease is called periodontitis (gum disease) which can be stabilised.

The loss of attachment allows bacteria to collect deep underneath the gum line, which hardens to form calculus, resulting in bad breath, pain and swelling. The disease worsens due to the development of these pockets.

Our clinicians routinely screen you for all types of gum disease by frequently taking measurements at the gum line using a coding system. It ranges from 0 to 4: a score of 3 or 4 indicates periodontitis and more detailed measuring will be carried out.

- What does treatment involve?

Treatment aims to reduce the amount of bacteria around your teeth and slow down the disease progression. We also look at links to your general health.

You will be taught the best methods of cleaning your teeth and gums to prevent the build-up of bacteria. This ensures you get the full benefits of treatment that lasts.

Typical treatment includes 'deep cleaning' to remove plaque, calculus and bacterial toxins. For this to be effective, every millimetre of every surface of each tooth is thoroughly cleaned both above and below the gum-line. Local anaesthetic is offered to make this cleaning comfortable for you. The number of appointments required is therefore bespoke for each patient.

After initial treatment, more advanced procedures may be possible. We will guide you through these options once we have assessed your response to deep cleaning.

Our specialist periodontist Joel is able to carry out non-surgical and surgical treatments for gum disease. He has an in depth knowledge and develops a bespoke treatment plan for each patient, offering the very best treatments.



- What are the benefits of treatment?

- Your gums will be healthier and you will notice:
- Greater confidence of a fresher mouth – better breath
- Gums are not sore or bleeding when you brush
- Teeth are less wobbly
- Less discomfort when you eat
- Ultimately, you will keep your teeth for longer
- Recent research also suggests a link between gum disease and other systemic diseases. It has been suggested that treatment may improve symptoms of diabetes, heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis as well as reduce the risk of dementia and low birth weight in babies.

- What can be expected after treatment?

There may be some gum soreness which usually lasts approximately 1-3 days. Routine pain killers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen are usually sufficient to manage this.

Treatment may result in a small amount of recession of the gum line and an increase in the size of gaps between the teeth. We can talk to you about options for disguising this where possible if it affects your smile.

Treatment can also make the teeth more sensitive to hot and cold. This will usually settle over the course of several weeks but we can help you through this time with special desensitising agents or toothpastes.

- Are there any alternative treatments?

No treatment – the result of having no treatment is that the condition is likely to progress far more rapidly. The teeth and gums may become painful and more wobbly. You are also more likely to lose your teeth sooner.

Tooth extractions – removal of teeth with severe disease may be an acceptable alternative and replacement options for these teeth can be considered. One key consideration however is that bone loss from gum disease can make placement of implants much more difficult or even not possible.

