

# PERIODONTAL DISEASE

I've heard a lot about gum disease lately. How do I know if I have it?

Periodontal (gum) disease affects three out of four adults at some time in their lives. It doesn't necessarily hurt and you may not even be aware that you have it until an advanced stage.

If you notice any of these warning signs, see your dentist:

- Gums that bleed during toothbrushing
- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth
- Persistent bad breath
- Pus between the teeth and gums
- Loose or separating teeth
- A change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- A change in the fit of partial dentures

Your teeth were intended to last a lifetime—and they can, if cared for properly

Many people do not realize that periodontal (gum) disease is the major cause of tooth loss in adults. This disease affects the gums, bone, and other supporting structures of the teeth. If not treated, it can cause the loss of even cavity-free teeth.

More than half of all adults over age 18 have at least the early stages of this disease. At some point in life, about three out of four adults will be affected by it. However, periodontal disease can occur at any age. Even children as young as five or six can have signs of this disease.

In gingivitis, the early stage of periodontal disease, only the soft gum tissue has been affected. At this stage, the disease is still reversible. If not treated, however, it can lead to periodontitis.

Periodontitis is the later stage of periodontal disease. The gums, bone, and other structures that support the teeth have been seriously damaged. At this stage, the disease may require extensive treatment or teeth may be lost.

Although periodontal disease is common, it can be prevented. In most cases, it results from neglect or improper care of the mouth. You can avoid the needless loss of teeth to this disease by understanding what causes it, learning and practicing good oral health habits, and seeking regular professional care.

It is very important for adults to have a Regular Dental Check-up to check for Periodontal Disease. A [Periodontal Probe](#) is used in conjunction with x-rays to determine if you have periodontal disease.