Do You Have Gum Disease?

SASKATCHEWAN ORAL HEALTH COALITION INC.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is an infection of the tissues that surround and support the teeth. There are two types of gum disease:

Gingivitis is gum disease that affects only the gums, the soft tissue that surrounds the teeth.

Periodontitis is more severe. It spreads below the gums to damage the tissues and bone that support the teeth.

- Gum disease can begin at an early age.

- It can be painless and can be difficult to detect in the early stages, except by a dental professional.

- When it is left untreated, it will cause the loss of teeth. Gum disease is the most common cause of tooth loss in adults.

- Studies show that severe gum disease may increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, pneumonia, and contribute to the birth of premature and/or low weight babies. Gum disease can also be a complication in diabetes.

What are the stages of gum disease?

- The earliest stage of gum disease is **gingivitis.** Gums will be puffy, tender, red and bleed easily. Bad breath and a bad taste in your mouth may also be present. Gingivitis is easily reversed by proper daily flossing and brushing.

- When gingivitis is left untreated it will progress to an advanced stage of gum disease called **periodontitis.** Gums will recede or pull away from the teeth. Bone and supporting tissues will be destroyed. Teeth will become loose and may shift and change positions.

- If periodontitis is ignored, teeth will begin to be lost. This is the final stage.

What causes gum disease?

- Gum disease is caused by plaque and other germs. Plaque is a sticky film of germs that continuously grows on your teeth and gums every day.

- When plaque is not removed each day by brushing and flossing, it builds up on the teeth and gums. This causes the gums to turn red and become puffy and tender. Gums will bleed easily, especially when brushed and/or flossed.

- If plaque is not removed it will harden into calculus. Calculus builds up around the teeth and under the gumline.

- When calculus is not removed, pockets form in the gums. Plaque and calculus continue to collect in these pockets and produce by-products that destroy the bone surrounding the teeth.

Accountable   **Collaborative**   **Common Goals**   **Dedicated**   **Evidence-Based Practice**   **Wellbeing**

How do I prevent gum disease?

- Plaque must be **thoroughly** removed every day:

    - **Flossing** is the **only** way to remove plaque from under the gumline and between teeth. A toothbrush cannot reach these areas!

Wrap floss around middle fingers (about half a meter or half an arm's length)

Gently guide floss between teeth

Move floss up and down, sliding under gumline, on both adjacent teeth

Gum disease is preventable!

- Calculus must be removed by a dental professional. This procedure is called scaling. Most adults will have varying amounts of calculus, even if oral hygiene practices are good.

How is gum disease treated?

- The first step in treating gum disease is to get the gum tissue to heal by removing the cause of the infection. This is done by having the individual follow a careful daily routine which includes flossing and brushing.

- Calculus will be removed above and under the gums. This may take several appointments. The teeth will also be polished.

- The second step is to clean out the deep gum pockets and to eliminate the pockets through oral surgery. Due to loose teeth, your bite may also need to be corrected. This is usually done by a specialist called a periodontist.

- The final step is a lifetime of oral hygiene maintenance through daily mouth care and regular dental visits.