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PERIODONTAL (GUM) DISEASE

The simplest form of gum disease is gingivitis, which is a reaction to the build-up of plaque and bacteria on the teeth. Plaque is a soft, sticky film that is made up of bacteria and toxins which live off sugar from the things that we eat and drink. Plaque can often build up in difficult to clean areas between teeth or just under the gum margin. It is important to clean these areas twice daily using a combination of toothbrush, floss/tape and/or interdental brushes.

The earliest signs of disease are bleeding of the gums or minor discomfort when brushing. Gums may also look red or swollen. Gingivitis can often be cured quickly and simply with really good oral hygiene techniques and regular, professional cleaning.

However, if gingivitis is left untreated it will progress into Periodontal Disease. This is where the tissues holding the teeth in place start to break down as pockets of bacteria and toxins begin to form around the teeth which in turn allows even more plaque to gather. Over time, the plaque will harden to form 'tartar' which in itself acts as a magnet attracting even more bacteria and plaque to build-up. It becomes a vicious circle and the whole disease can often be quite painless but can become severe very quickly, ultimately resulting in tooth loss.

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Symptoms to watch out for are:

- Persistent bad taste or bad breath
- Teeth that are moving or changing position.
- Red, swollen gums
- Bleeding when brushing teeth.

What does your dental hygienist or therapist do?

- If you have been diagnosed with gingivitis or periodontal disease your dentist, hygienist or therapist will prescribe a course of treatment to treat and maintain the disease.
- This will usually involve several appointments where we carry out professional 'deep cleaning' of your teeth and gums – often under local anaesthetic.
- We will use a range of specialised hand instruments combined with an ultrasonic scaler that is designed to remove bacteria and toxins from below the root surface. This process is known as 'root planing' or 'debridement'.
- Time and precision are used to repeatedly clean & disinfect these areas over a period of 2 -10 weeks (depending on individual needs) to remove bacterial toxins and reduce the risk of imminent reinfection.
- We may give you a prescription for some anti-biotics if the disease is advanced and we feel that the volume of toxins present may be affecting your general health.

Following successful treatment, your hygienist or therapist will create a personalised 'maintenance programme', which means regular follow-up visits for professional cleans to ensure that we keep the disease at bay. We will also show you how to perfect your home-care techniques to ensure that you are doing as much as you can between visits to maintain your oral health at home.



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