



Gum disease and how to treat it

Gum disease is the most common cause of tooth loss in adults. It is caused by a build up of plaque, which is a film of bacteria, around the necks of the teeth along the gum margin. This plaque can harden to form tartar or calculus. If left for more than a day the plaque will irritate the gums which become inflamed. This is called **gingivitis**.

Key signs of gum disease:

- Red, swollen gums
- Bleeding gums when you eat or brush your teeth
- Bad breath

This condition is entirely reversible and can be corrected with proper tooth brushing and cleaning between the teeth.

In some people this gingivitis can spread down between the tooth and gum and destroy the bone and attachment between the teeth and gums and is called **periodontitis**. Though usually painless, this is a more serious condition which can lead to the loss of the teeth.

Smoking often makes the destruction more aggressive and more difficult to treat.

Gum disease Treatment:

The aim of treatment is to prevent the loss of teeth or at least to slow the progress of the gum disease down, by removing the plaque and scale.

Efficient tooth brushing and cleaning between the teeth by yourself is essential if the treatment and control of your condition is going to succeed. We will spend some time in giving you advice on this. It is unlikely that we will spend a lot of time cleaning your teeth until you have been able to demonstrate that you are able to clean them adequately yourself.

Treatment of gum disease may involve several visits and include:

- A more detailed measurement of the health of your gums.
- Advice on various methods to help clean your teeth.
- The thorough scaling of teeth as required, usually over two appointments.

The teeth are sometimes sensitive after scaling. This is because the root surface which was covered by scale is suddenly exposed to your food, drink and cold air. This change in temperature at the root surface causes the sensitivity and it usually disappears after a few days. Tooth sensitivity toothpaste will help over time.

What are the alternatives to treatment?

1. Referral to a specialist in this field who may be able treat the tooth better via the use of a microscope and specialist equipment etc.
2. Treating the tooth in a different way such as extraction.
3. Refusing treatment but this will result in a high risk of further loss of gum strength ultimately leading to loss of some teeth.