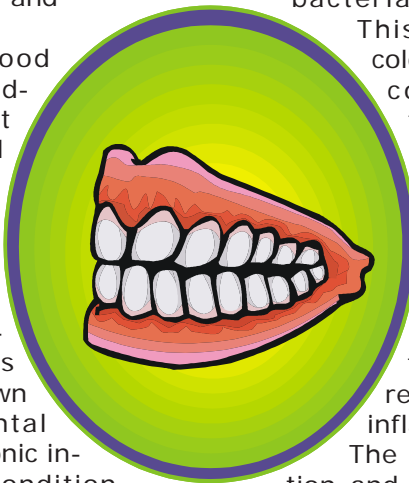




Gum Inflammation May Affect the Body

Significant progress is being made in the study and treatment of periodontal diseases, including the link between periodontal health and overall health.

This is good news since studies show that periodontal disease may represent a far more serious threat to the health of many Americans. It has long been known that periodontal disease, a chronic inflammatory condition, may cause tooth loss. Now research has identified that periodontal inflammation may be linked to heart disease, preterm births, low birthweight infants, respiratory disease and diabetes. People with inflammatory-related risk



factors will want to monitor their periodontal health throughout their lives.

Periodontal disease is a gum infection caused by bacterial plaque.

This sticky, colorless film constantly forms on the teeth. Bacteria in plaque infect the gums and release toxins that cause redness and inflammation.

The inflammation and the toxins cause destruction of the tissues that support the teeth, including bone. When this happens, the gums separate from the teeth, forming pockets that become infected.

If the plaque is not removed, it can turn into a

hard substance called calculus or tartar in less than two days. Tartar is so hard it can only be removed by an oral health professional such as a dentist or dental hygienist.

If diagnosed and treated with periodontal disease, your periodontist will work with you to determine the best treatment options to control your disease and bring you back to health. If periodontal disease is in the early stages, simple non-surgical periodontal therapy may be sufficient. If periodontitis has advanced to the point where the periodontal pockets are deep and significant amounts of bone are lost, surgical therapy may be necessary.

Once periodontitis has been controlled, patients will require ongoing periodontal maintenance procedures to sustain health.

Forms of Periodontal Disease

There are many types of periodontal diseases. Following is an overview of the most common: **Gingivitis** is the mildest form, and causes the gums to become red, swollen and bleed easily. There is usually no discomfort at this stage.

Chronic periodontitis is a condition resulting in inflammation within the soft tissues surrounding the teeth causing progressive attachment and bone loss. The bone loss, gum pockets and receding gums are diagnosed through a periodontal examination and dental X-rays. Although chronic periodontitis occurs at any age, it's most common in adults.

Aggressive periodontitis occurs in patients who are otherwise in good health. Common features include rapid soft tissue destruction and bone destruction. There are two forms of aggressive periodontitis:

Localized aggressive periodontitis – most often occurs near puberty and usually involves tissue destruction around first molars and/or front teeth but may involve one or two additional teeth.

Generalized aggressive periodontitis – often affects people under 30 years of age, but not

always. It involves tissue destruction on at least three permanent teeth in addition to first molars and incisors. Common symptoms of periodontal disease include:

- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Bleeding while brushing or flossing
- Gums pulling away from the teeth
- Loose or separating teeth
- Pus between the gum and tooth
- Persistent bad breath
- A change in the way teeth fit together when you bite
- Change in the fit of partial dentures.

If you notice any of these symptoms, you should see a periodontist.

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM for a free brochure on periodontal disease.

For more information visit www.perio.org