

Patient Education Handout

What causes Periodontal Disease?

Periodontal (gum) disease is an infection caused by bacteria. In about a day's time, mouth bacteria multiply and form a sticky, almost invisible film on the teeth called plaque. Plaque that is not removed by regular brushing and flossing can harden into calculus (tartar). In some cases, the plaque and calculus cause the gums to become red and inflamed and may bleed upon brushing. This condition is called gingivitis. Over time, toxins in plaque can cause the tissue and bone that support the teeth to be destroyed (bone loss), forming a hidden pocket between the tooth and the gum. Your dentist and hygienist will use a periodontal probe to measure how deep these pockets may be. The depth of these hidden pockets, termed "pocket depth," is the main indicator for the presence of periodontal disease.

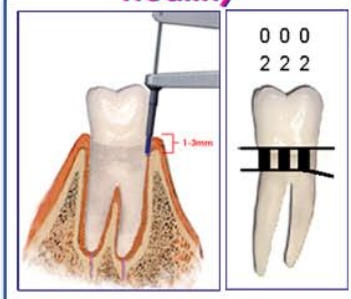
Stages of Periodontal Disease

Warning Signs

There are few, if any, early warning signs, but as the disease progresses, the signs and symptoms become more obvious.

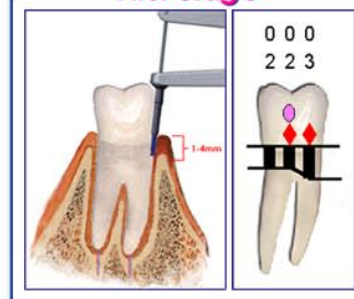
1. Red, swollen gums that may bleed easily
2. Persistent bad breath
3. Tall looking teeth (Recession)
4. Loose teeth (Mobility)

Healthy



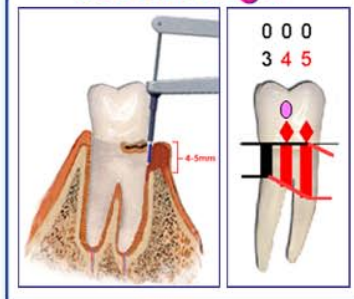
- ▶ Coral pink gums
- ▶ Gums hug teeth tightly
- ▶ No bleeding
- ▶ Pockets 1-3 mm deep

First Stage



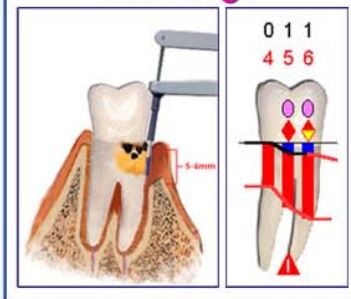
- (Gingivitis)
- ▶ Gums become red/swollen, or may bleed easily
 - ▶ This stage is not always obvious
 - ▶ Pockets 1-4 mm deep

Second Stage



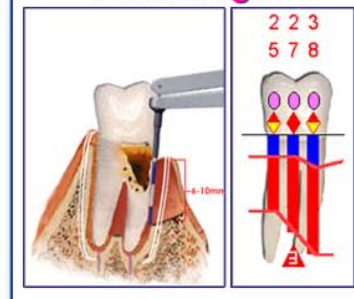
- (Early Periodontitis)
- ▶ Pockets form as gums separate from the teeth
 - ▶ Pockets 4-5 mm deep

Third Stage



- (Moderate Periodontitis)
- ▶ Pockets deepen as more bone supporting the tooth is lost
 - ▶ Pockets become difficult to clean as they deepen
 - ▶ Pockets 5-6 mm deep

Fourth Stage



- (Advanced Periodontitis)
- ▶ More than 50% of the bone supporting the tooth has been lost
 - ▶ Pockets 6-10 mm deep
 - ▶ Teeth loosen or may need to be extracted

Do you have Periodontal Disease?

If left untreated, periodontal disease can lead to bleeding, discomfort, receding gums and tooth loss. More than 50% of adults over the age of 30 have some gingivitis and more than 33% have periodontitis. Periodontal disease negatively affects 3 out of 4 people at some point in life. Dental research has recently linked periodontal disease to an increased rate of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, respiratory disease, and pre-term and low birth weight babies. The Florida Probe is a high-tech diagnostic system used in the fight against periodontal disease. Speak with your dentist about routine periodontal probings, maintenance of deep pockets and ways to improve your home care. Remember that early diagnosis and treatment is the key to maintaining your oral health and preventing serious health issues.