

GUM DISEASE

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

D12

WHAT CAUSES GUM DISEASE?

Bacteria found on your teeth in a sticky film called plaque causes gum disease. They produce toxins that irritate and inflame the gums. If left untreated, the process progresses until the bone and supporting tissues around the tooth are destroyed. This leads to lack of support and eventual tooth loss.

HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE GUM DISEASE?

The following are warning signs that may not cause any pain until the advanced stages:

- Bleeding gums when brushing
- Receding gums or gums pulled away from your teeth
- Red, puffy, or sore gums
- Persistent bad breath
- Loose or drifting teeth
- A change in your bite
- Pus around the teeth and gums

ARE YOU AT RISK?

Everyone is at risk. If you smoke, chew tobacco, have diabetes, HIV, take medications that dry your mouth or change hormone levels, have crowded or crooked teeth, or defective fillings or restorations you may be at a greater risk. Genetics also plays a role.

WHAT TYPES OF GUM DISEASE ARE THERE?

- Gingivitis is the mildest form with red bleeding gums that can be improved with professional treatment and good oral home care.
- Periodontitis involves a more progressive destruction of the bone and may require a specialist with surgical techniques to slow the progression of bone and tooth loss.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

A complete periodontal exam will need to be done to evaluate your teeth and bone levels. X-rays will need to be taken and measurements of the depths of the pockets between your teeth and gums. Healthy gums should have a pocket depth of 3mm or less. Deeper pockets will need further treatment and evaluation.

A professional cleaning to remove the deposits and bacteria on your teeth is often the first step. Diligent home care with brushing, flossing, and other aids is extremely important. Sometimes medications and surgery are required in order to bring the pocket depths to a level you can clean and maintain with your oral home care. Gum disease will not go away by itself. Preventing and treating the disease early is the best way to keep a healthy smile.

Student Health Center



www.shc.siuc.edu

618-536-2421