

GUM DISEASE

Screening for gum disease forms an integral part of your routine examination.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease describes swelling, soreness or infection of the tissues supporting the teeth. There are two main forms of gum disease: gingivitis and periodontal disease.

What is gingivitis?

Gingivitis means inflammation of the gums. This is when the gums around the teeth become very red and swollen. Often the swollen gums bleed when they are brushed during cleaning.

What is periodontal disease?

Long-standing gingivitis can turn into periodontal disease. There are a number of types of periodontal disease and they all affect the tissues supporting the teeth. As the disease gets worse the bone anchoring the teeth in the jaw is lost, making the teeth loose. If this is not treated, the teeth may eventually fall out.

What is the cause of gum disease?

All gum diseases are caused by plaque. Plaque is a film of bacteria which forms on the surface of the teeth and gums every day. Many of the bacteria in plaque are completely harmless, but there are some that have been shown to be the main cause of gum disease. To prevent and treat gum disease, you need to make sure you remove all the plaque from your teeth every day. This is done by brushing and flossing.

What happens if gum disease is not treated?

Unfortunately, gum disease progresses painlessly on the whole so that you do not notice the damage it is doing. However, the bacteria are sometimes more active and this makes your gums sore. This can lead to gum abscesses, and pus may ooze from around the teeth. Over a number of years, the bone supporting the teeth can be lost. If the disease is left untreated for a long time, treatment can become more difficult.

How do I know if I have gum disease?

The first sign is blood on the toothbrush or in the rinsing water when you clean your teeth. Your gums may also bleed when you are eating, leaving a bad taste in your mouth. Your breath may also become unpleasant.