

Causes of Gum Disease

The main cause of periodontal (gum) disease is plaque, but other factors affect the health of your gums.

Periodontal (gum) diseases, including gingivitis and periodontitis, are serious infections that, left untreated, can lead to tooth loss. Periodontal disease can affect one tooth or many teeth. The main cause of periodontal disease is bacterial plaque, a sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on your teeth. However, factors like the following also affect the health of your gums:

Smoking/Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is linked with many serious illnesses such as cancer, lung disease and heart disease, as well as numerous other health problems. What you may not know is that tobacco users also are at increased risk for periodontal disease.

Puberty, Pregnancy in Women

A woman's health needs are unique. Though brushing and flossing daily, a healthy diet, and regular exercise are important for oral health throughout life, there are certain times in a woman's life when extra care is needed—times when you mature and change such as puberty and times when you have special health needs, such as menstruation or pregnancy. During these particular times, a woman's body experiences hormonal changes that can affect many of the tissues in your body, including the gums.

Stress

Stress is linked to many serious conditions such as hypertension, cancer, and numerous other health problems. What you may not know is that stress also is a risk factor for periodontal disease. Research demonstrates that stress can make it more difficult for the body to fight off infection, including periodontal diseases.

Medications

Some drugs, such as oral contraceptives, anti-depressants, and certain heart medicines, can affect your oral health. Just as you notify your pharmacist and other health care providers of all medicines you are taking and any changes in your overall health, you should also inform your dental care provider.

Clenching or Grinding Your Teeth

Has anyone ever told you that you grind your teeth at night? Is your jaw sore from clenching your teeth when you're taking a test or solving a problem at work? Clenching or grinding your teeth can put excess force on the supporting tissues of the teeth and could speed up the rate at which these periodontal tissues are destroyed.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease that causes altered levels of sugar in the blood. Diabetes develops from either a deficiency in insulin production (a hormone that is the key component in the body's ability to use blood sugars) or the body's inability to use insulin correctly. If you are diabetic, you are at higher risk for developing infections, including periodontal diseases. These infections can impair the ability to process and/or utilize insulin, which may cause your diabetes to be more difficult to control and your infection to be more severe than a non-diabetic.

Other Systemic Diseases

Diseases that interfere with the body's immune system may worsen the condition of the gums.

Poor Nutrition and Obesity

As you may already know, a diet low in important nutrients can compromise the body's immune system and make it harder for the body to fight off infection. Because periodontal disease is a serious infection, poor nutrition can worsen the condition of your gums.

Periodontal(Gum)Surgeries

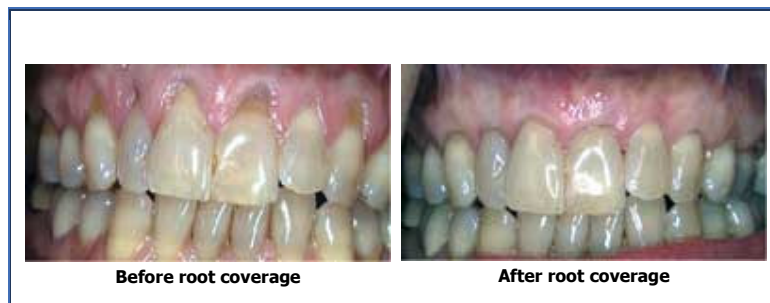
Gummy Smile or Uneven Gum Line

Do you feel your teeth look too short and your smile is too gummy or your gums cover too much of some teeth while leaving the others the right length? If so crown lengthening might be the solution for you. During this procedure, excess gum tissue is removed to expose more of the crown of the tooth. Then your gumline is sculpted to give your new smile just the right look.

Long Teeth/Exposed Roots

Do you feel you look older than you really are? Sometimes gum recession causes the tooth root to become exposed, which makes your teeth look long and can make you look older than you are. This recession can happen as a result of a variety of causes, including periodontal diseases. Whatever the reason, exposed roots are unappealing and can leave you at risk of developing cavities on your tooth root.

Soft tissue grafts and other root coverage procedures are designed to cover exposed roots, to reduce further gum recession and to protect vulnerable roots from decay.



Indentations in the Gums and Jawbone

Tooth loss can cause an indentation in the gums and jawbone where the tooth used to be. This happens because the jawbone recedes when it no longer is holding a tooth in place. Not only is this indentation unnatural looking, it also causes the replacement tooth to look too long compared to the adjacent teeth.

Ridge augmentation can fill in this defect recapturing the natural contour of the gums and jaw. A new tooth can then be created that is natural looking, easy to clean and beautiful.

