



## **Periodontics FAQs**

### **What is a periodontist?**

A periodontist is a dentist who specializes in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of periodontal disease and in the placement of dental implants. Periodontists receive extensive training in these areas, including three additional years of education beyond dental school. Periodontists are familiar with the latest techniques for diagnosing and treating periodontal disease. In addition, they can perform cosmetic periodontal procedures to help you achieve the smile you desire. Often, dentists refer their patients to a periodontist when their periodontal disease is advanced. However, you don't need a referral to see a periodontist. In fact, there are occasions when you may choose to go directly to a periodontist or to refer a family member or friend to your own periodontist.

### **What are periodontal diseases?**

The word periodontal literally means "around the tooth." Periodontal diseases are serious bacterial infections that destroy the attachment fibers and supporting bone that hold your teeth in your mouth. Left untreated, these diseases can lead to tooth loss. There are many forms of periodontal disease:

- Gingivitis
- Aggressive periodontitis
- Chronic periodontitis
- Periodontitis as a manifestation of systemic diseases
- Necrotizing periodontal diseases

### **When should I see a periodontist?**

If you value your oral as well as overall health, anytime is a good time to see a periodontist for a periodontal evaluation. Sometimes the only way to detect periodontal disease is through a periodontal evaluation. A periodontal evaluation may be especially important in the following situations:

If you notice any symptoms of periodontal disease, including:

- gums that bleed easily, such as during brushing or flossing
- red, swollen or tender gums
- gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- persistent bad breath
- pus between the teeth and gums
- loose or separating teeth
- a change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- a sore or irritation in your mouth that does not get better within two weeks
- If you feel that your teeth are too short or that your smile is too "gummy." Or, if you are missing one or more of your teeth and are interested in a long-lasting replacement option.

- If you are not satisfied with your current tooth replacement option, such as a bridge or dentures, and may be interested in dental implants.

### **What is the treatment for periodontal diseases?**

Once your periodontal health has been evaluated, we will work with you to determine the treatment options that are best to arrest your disease and bring you back to health.

Depending on how far the diseases have progressed, treatment can vary widely. If caught in the early stages, simple procedures are done that will remove the plaque and calculus from below the gum line and eliminate the infection-causing bacteria. If the diseases have advanced to the point where the periodontal pockets are deep and the supporting bone is lost, further treatment might be needed.

Whatever the treatment may entail, the goal is to return you to good oral health and then help you maintain it.

Benefits of periodontal treatment include:

- Elimination / control of infection
- Re-grow lost bone tissue (bone grafts / regeneration)
- Retain teeth
- Fresh breath
- A more youthful appearance

### **What can I do to avoid periodontal disease?**

To keep your teeth for a lifetime, you must remove the plaque from your teeth and gums every day with proper brushing and flossing. Regular dental visits are also important. Daily cleaning will help keep calculus formation to a minimum, but it won't completely prevent it. A professional cleaning at least twice a year is necessary to remove calculus from places your toothbrush and floss may have missed.

### **Is it normal for my gums to bleed when I brush my teeth?**

Bleeding gums are one of the signs of gum disease. Think of gum tissue as the skin on your hand. If your hands bled every time you washed them, you would know something was wrong. There are a number of other warning signs of gum disease.