



## PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Periodontal disease, also known as gum disease, is an infection that attacks the bone and gums that support your teeth. It is a major cause of tooth loss in adults.<sup>1</sup>

Bacteria in your mouth, called plaque, are the major cause of periodontal disease. Other risk factors include smoking, hormonal changes in girls and women, diabetes, other illnesses like cancer or AIDS, certain medications, and genetic susceptibility.<sup>2</sup>

If bacteria are not removed regularly by brushing and flossing, plaque can harden into tartar (also called calculus). The rough surface of this tartar encourages bacteria to cling to the teeth and under the gumline.<sup>2</sup> These bacteria can inflame the specialized tissues that surround and support the teeth, causing pain.

Prolonged inflammation of your gums and the bone around your teeth leads to bone loss and weakening of the tissues that attach the teeth to the gums, two signs of periodontal disease. The initial stage of periodontal disease, called gingivitis, is reversible with proper dental care: brushing, flossing, and regular dental visits.<sup>1</sup>

Symptoms of gum disease include bad breath that won't go away, red or swollen gums, tender or bleeding gums, painful chewing, loose teeth, sensitive teeth, and receding gums (teeth appearing longer).<sup>1</sup>

Keep your teeth and mouth healthy for a lifetime! Ask your dental hygienist and dentist to evaluate the health of your gums.

For more information, contact the Division of Public Health, Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services, at 302-744-4554 and [www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html).

### Resources

1. American Dental Association. 2014. *Gum Disease*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved February 12, 2015 from: <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/g/gum-disease>
2. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. September 2013. *Periodontal (Gum) Disease: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments*. In National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Retrieved February 12, 2015 from: <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/GumDiseases/PeriodontalGumDisease.htm>

**24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156**

Revised: 07/2016

Page 1 of 1