

Gum Disease

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is when the tissue around the teeth get red, swollen, and painful. It can cause many problems. If severe, the teeth can fall out. If not treated, it can cause other problems in the body.

What causes gum disease?

A sticky layer of germs forms on the teeth. This is called plaque. If the plaque is not removed daily, it causes gum disease.

What are the symptoms of gum disease?

- Gum disease is often painless. You or your child may not know they have it.
- The gums become sore, swollen, and red. Gums will bleed easily.
- The soreness makes it harder to remove germs by brushing and flossing.
- The germs go deeper into the gums.
- Over time, the germs destroy the bone around your teeth and cause tooth loss.
- Some forms of this disease can cause faster tooth loss, especially in children.
- Can cause bad breath.

How is gum disease treated?

- Good daily home care. Everyone must brush and floss their teeth every day.
- Regular teeth cleanings at your dentist.
- Deep cleaning may be needed. This is called scaling and root planing.

What is the deep cleaning or scaling and root planing procedure?

- The dentist or dental hygienist will measure your child's gums.
- A numbing medicine will be used for the gums. The numbing medicine helps your child not to feel the cleaning as much.
- Teeth will be cleaned more deeply than a regular dental cleaning.
- Your dentist may prescribe medicine or a mouth rinse to use after the procedure.
- Your child needs to return for a follow up visit. The dentist will recheck your child's gum measurements to be sure their gums are healing correctly.
- Your child may need more treatments. Your dentist will talk to you about this if it is needed.

What are the risks of the scaling and root planing procedure?

1. Discomfort, soreness, or pain in the gums. Teeth may be more sensitive for a week after treatment. Your child's gums may feel tender, be swollen and bleed more easily for about 1 week.
2. Rarely, your child may have drug reaction, infection, a sore jaw, and cracks in the corners of their mouth.
3. Rarely, tooth sensitivity that does not go away.

Other Information

- Your doctor or dentist may refer you to a periodontist. Periodontists are doctors that treat gum diseases. Talk about this option with your dentist.
- Gum disease can lead to other problems with your heart, diabetes, or how you look and feel.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs that are not met by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.