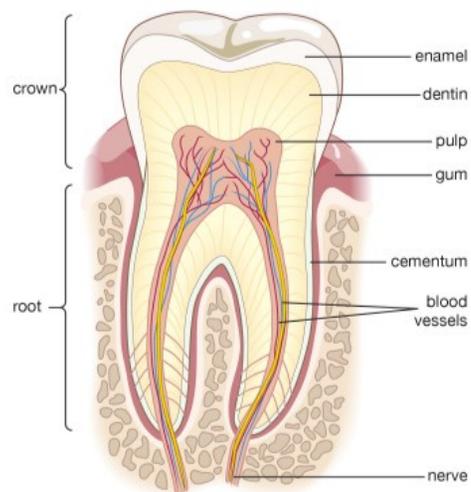


## Gum Disease: What You Need to Know

Gum disease (periodontal disease) is the leading cause of tooth loss in adults, affecting 3 out of 4 people at some point in life. It affects the gums and supporting structures of your teeth. If not treated, it can cause irreversible damage to the gums and bone surrounding the teeth. It may also increase your risk for developing heart problems.

In a healthy mouth, teeth fit snugly in their sockets, with their roots surrounded by a strong foundation of gums and other supportive tissues. This tissue holds teeth firmly to the bone and acts as a shock absorber during the pressure of biting and chewing.



In an unhealthy mouth, bacteria may infect the gums. In some people, bacteria attack the deeper supportive tissues, destroying and weakening this foundation. This can lead to eventual tooth loss. These bacteria can also affect other parts of your body including your heart and blood vessels.

## What are the Signs of Gum Disease?

There are many signs of gum disease. These are some of the most common ones:

- Bleeding gums during brushing
- 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 change in the fit of your partial dentures
- Sensitivity to hot, cold or sweet foods or liquids

If you notice any of these signs, you should contact our office and arrange for an assessment.

It is possible to have gum disease and not have any of these signs. Most people do not experience any pain due to gum disease, and therefore, it can go untreated. Regular dental check ups, including x-rays, will help us to detect and monitor the health of your teeth and gums on an ongoing basis.

## What Causes Gum Disease?

Under normal circumstances, many kinds of bacteria live and grow in a healthy mouth. Some cause tooth decay. Others form a sticky colourless film called plaque. As it accumulates, plaque appears as a soft, whitish coating. It forms constantly, but can be controlled by proper brushing and flossing. If not removed regularly, plaque can harden into tartar or calculus. The tartar coats and sticks to the teeth and roots allowing more plaque and bacteria to adhere to the teeth. The bacteria use the plaque and tartar to attach to your teeth and roots.

## Did you know?

Researchers have found that the need for insulin is reduced in diabetic patients who do not have gum disease.

Researchers have found that gum disease is one of the risk factors for heart disease.



## How is Gum Disease Treated?

Gum disease is detected by examining the gums and measuring the depths of the pockets surrounding the roots of the teeth. As part of your regular dental check up and cleaning, we examine the gums and measure the depths of the pockets. X-rays will also show the amount and extent of the bone destruction.



The course of treatment depends upon the extent of the disease. The basis for all treatment is to clean the teeth and root surfaces thoroughly. This is done at **King Street Dental** and on a daily basis at your home. In our office, we will scale or root plane the teeth and root surfaces in order to remove the tartar and bacteria. Usually, the cleaning will allow the gum to adapt itself back to the tooth or shrink enough to eliminate the pocket.

We may involve **Dr. Roland Leung**, our periodontist, in helping to manage and treat your gum problems. He may suggest surgical treatment to help treat the disease. The goals of this treatment are to remove tartar from deep pockets, smooth root surfaces and arrange gum tissue into a shape that will be easier to keep clean.

**You can help!** Daily brushing and flossing are essential. We may also recommend special mouthwashes or antibiotics to help eliminate the bacteria. The key is to spot the signs early and to keep your regular dental check ups.

## Regular Dental Check-Ups

Regular dental check-ups are an important part of any good prevention program. Your dental check up at **King Street Dental** allows us to detect problems when they are small, in order to keep them from becoming worse. Regular dental cleanings remove plaque and tartar build up around teeth which cause tooth decay and gum disease. For children, regular check ups allow us to monitor the growth of their teeth and jaws and treat potential orthodontic problems before they become major ones. For patients of all ages, regular dental check ups allow us to monitor the wear on existing fillings, replacing those which are worn out before they begin to break down and allow the tooth underneath to decay.

From reviewing current dental literature and from our own clinical observations, we feel that a policy of semi-annual check-ups, adopted by the Canadian Dental Association, provides a good preventive program for our patients. Some patients need more frequent monitoring, some less, but the semi annual dental check up is designed to prevent costly long term dental problems and enhance your overall oral health.

Tooth decay and gum disease can be prevented. **King Street Dental** can help you reduce tooth decay with some easy techniques involving regular care under our guidance.

Gum disease has been linked to other health problems such as diabetes, cardiovascular problems, osteoporosis, respiratory diseases and premature and under-weight births. Healthy gums can help to keep you healthy. Gum disease is not just a dental problem.



## Gum Disease

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