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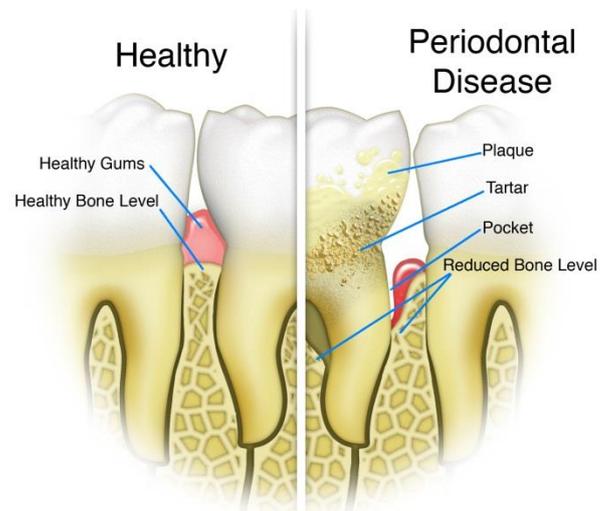
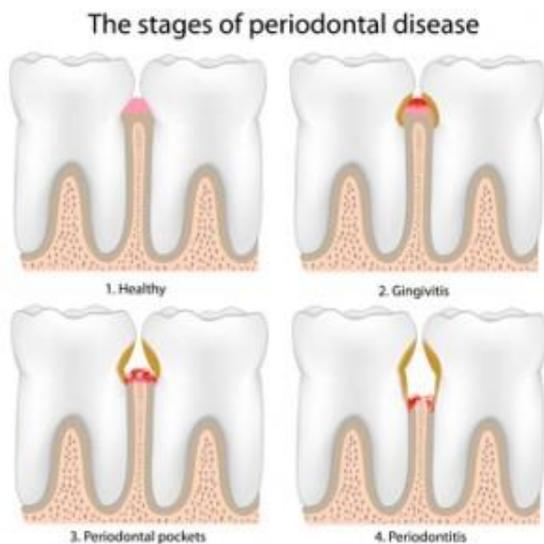
GUM DISEASE

Gum disease (periodontitis) affects most people at some time during their life. It is usually caused by a build-up of plaque on teeth. There are two main stages of gum disease: gingivitis and periodontitis.

Periodontitis can affect the covering of the tooth root (cementum), the bone and the fibres that connect the cementum to the bone (periodontal ligament). As the disease progresses and bone is lost, larger spaces begin to form between the tooth and the gum.

Signs of periodontitis:

- bleeding
- swelling
- receding gums with bad breath
- a bad taste in the mouth
- loose teeth



GINGIVITIS

Gingivitis is early gum disease and occurs when dental plaque builds up on teeth, particularly where the gum joins the tooth.

Signs of gingivitis:

- bleeding – particularly when brushing
- redness
- swelling of the gum

PERIODONTITIS

Periodontitis is an advanced gum disease that may occur if gingivitis is not treated. The gum margin, i.e. the part of the gum that seals the tooth, is weakened and spaces form between the tooth and the gum. These spaces are called “periodontal pockets”. Bacteria become trapped in these pockets causing further inflammation.

CAUSES OF GUM DISEASE

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

- smoking prevents the gum tissue from being able to heal
- crooked, rotated or overlapping teeth create more areas for plaque to accumulate and are harder to keep clean
- hormonal changes in puberty, pregnancy, and menopause can cause the blood vessels in the gums to be more susceptible to bacterial and chemical damage

- stress impairs the body's immune response to bacterial invasion
- mouth breathing can be harsh on the gums when they aren't protected by the lips, causing chronic irritation and inflammation
- poor nutrition such a diet high in sugar and carbohydrates and low water intake will increase the formation of plaque
- diabetes mellitus impairs circulation and the gums' ability to heal
- medications such as anti-seizure medications promote gum disease

HOW YOU CAN MAINTAIN GOOD ORAL HEALTH

- brush teeth and gums, as well as floss between teeth – pay special attention to your back teeth
- change your toothbrush every 3 months
- if your gums bleed, don't stop brushing and flossing, just switch to a brush with softer bristles
- eat a healthy and balanced diet of fresh fruit and vegetable, lean meat, fish and wholegrains
- avoid saturated fats in your diet such as full fat dairy products, butter and take-away foods
- limit sugary foods and drinks to meal times
- brush your teeth and gums twice a day with a fluoridated toothpaste
- visit a dentist or other oral health professional regularly
- drink plenty of fluoridated tap water
- avoid smoking

The information presented on this leaflet is only a summary of gum disease and should therefore be used only as a guide. It does not replace personal discussion with your dentist. Should you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us for advice. Please call us on 9840 2963.