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Prevention of Gum Disease

Information for Patients

At Hexham Dental Clinic we want you to have healthy gums to help you retain your teeth for the whole of your life. Gum disease is a bacterial disease that affects the gums and may lead to periodontal disease which can destroy the bone that supports your teeth. It is extremely common and affects 3 out of 4 adults over the age of 35 in the UK. Adults are most susceptible but from teenage years the first effects of gum disease may be diagnosed.

Periodontal disease is now the most common cause of tooth loss in the UK.

Gum disease rarely causes pain until the teeth are about to fall-out. Signs and symptoms of gum disease include bleeding gums, bad breath and taste, "wobbly" or "drifting" teeth. If you have any of these please contact the practice for assessment and diagnosis. Your dentist or hygienist will assess your risk of gum disease and help develop a personalised program of treatment and prevention with you.

The advice below based on the department of health guidance 2nd edition, published July 2009. It is intended as general advice only and is not a substitute for a bespoke programme of prevention with your hygienist or dentist.

Toothbrushes

Brush your teeth systematically twice daily. Electric toothbrushes, provided they are used correctly, are more effective than a manual toothbrush. Make sure you change the head regularly and ensure it is fully charged each time you use it. For this reason we would recommend a rechargeable type. The best type of electric toothbrush has a round-head with an *oscillating/ pulsating* action which has been proven to remove 25% more plaque than a manual toothbrush. (*One example of such toothbrush is the Oral-B professional care.*) If you choose to use a manual toothbrush, choose one with a small head and round end filaments, a compact, angled arrangement of long and short filaments and a comfortable handle. No toothbrush can effectively clean in-between your teeth so we recommend daily interdental cleaning in combination with tooth brushing.

Interdental cleaning

We recommend daily interdental (*in-between the teeth*) cleaning.

Interdental brushes such as "TePe's" present the most effective way to clean between your teeth. If you have tight spaces between your teeth and are unable to use interdental brushes then Dental-floss or tape is commonly recommended. Waxed floss or tape has a lesser tendency to fray during use. Many people struggle with traditional dental-floss so a "flosser" such as the *Crest "Glide"* or *Wisdom "Easy Floss Daily Flosser"* may be an easier solution. You may find flossers easier to manipulate at the back of your mouth than traditional dental floss. If you are unsure as to which would be the best solution for you, ask your hygienist or dentist for a recommendation.

Toothpaste

There is no single general toothpaste that we would recommend over another but all adults should choose one with a fluoride content of at least 1,350 ppm. Studies show that those containing "Triclosan" may provide a benefit against gum disease. If you have receded gums the root surfaces may be more prone to decay and we may recommend "Duraphat" toothpaste which is a prescription only medication because of its high fluoride content.

Mouthrinses

There is no single mouth rinse that we would recommend to everyone. The antibacterial agents found in many mouthrinses are only active for a limited amount of time and as such are not particularly effective at treating the disease. Some more potent mouthrinses such as corsodyl may be very effective against bacteria but can leave unsightly staining on your teeth so we do not recommend them for general long-term use.

Smoking

Smoking is a massive risk factor for gum disease. A smoker is twice more likely to lose their teeth due to gum disease than a non-smoker. Current advice is that if you are a smoker with gum disease stopping smoking is the best thing you can do to prevent tooth loss.