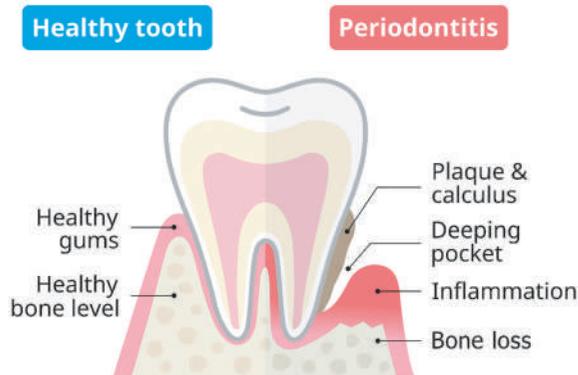


What is Periodontal Disease?

Periodontal disease (also known as gum disease) occurs when the buildup of plaque bacteria irritate the gums and trigger an inflammatory response characterized by reddened tissue, swelling, and bleeding. Bacteria erode gum and bone tissue, causing gum recession, spaces between the teeth and gums, loosening and shifting teeth, and eventually tooth loss.

Periodontal Disease and Your Overall Health

Your periodontal health can have an impact on your overall health and vice versa. This relationship is what periodontists call the *perio-systemic link*. Research continually finds that periodontal disease shares an association with a number of other conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and dementia. Caring for your gums with the help of a periodontist is a key component of ensuring your wellbeing beyond the mouth.



Periodontists: An Important Part of Your Care Team

Dr. Aldredge is a specialist in treating gum disease and placing dental implants. He is uniquely qualified to diagnose and manage periodontal/gum disease. Dr. Aldredge has three additional years of training after dental school to master the skills needed to provide predictable and successful periodontal care and dental implant placement.

If you have been diagnosed with periodontal disease and another systemic ailment, it is best to create a care team that includes your physician and Dr. Aldredge. Keeping them informed of your conditions and any treatments you undergo can help with disease management and reduce the risk of complications.

Beyond the Mouth

The Link Between Periodontal/Gum Disease and Other Health Conditions



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Diabetes

Periodontal disease is often considered a complication of diabetes, an inflammatory condition in which the body is unable to produce or properly use insulin to convert sugar into energy. People with diabetes are up to four times more likely to develop periodontal disease. Research also finds that people with both diabetes and periodontal disease tend to experience severe levels of bone loss and more aggressive periodontal disease advancement, which can lead to tooth loss.

Tooth loss can make chewing and digesting food difficult, having a negative impact on a diabetic's ability to maintain proper nutrition and control his or her blood sugar levels. Periodontal disease also raises a person's systemic inflammatory signals, which increase blood sugar. Treating periodontal disease can be key for optimal diabetic control.



Heart Disease and Stroke

People with periodontal disease are nearly twice as likely to develop heart disease. Many researchers believe that bad oral bacteria are at the root of this link. These bacteria can enter the bloodstream and travel to other parts of the body, triggering an inflammatory response and the development of plaque that narrows and hardens the arteries. These slow-building blockages can eventually lead to a heart attack or stroke.



Cancer

Studies have found links between periodontal disease and various types of cancer, most notably pancreatic cancer and lung cancer. One well-known study found that men with a history of periodontal disease are 14 percent more likely to develop cancer than men with healthy gums. A direct cause-and-effect relationship between periodontal disease and cancer has yet to be established, and it's important to note that the two conditions share risk factors such as tobacco use, age, and genetics.



Alzheimer's/Dementia

Periodontal disease is associated with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. A prestigious study found that if bad oral bacteria travels through the bloodstream to the brain, it can kill the immune cells that protect neurons from pathogens. One pathogen is a protein that causes cell death. This leads to cognitive decline and is a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease.

