



One of the most common—yet preventable—dental diseases is periodontal (gum) disease. In fact, 3 out of 4 adults over the age of 35 have some type of periodontal disease (*JADA*, Vol. 133, 2002).

The two main stages of periodontal disease are gingivitis and periodontitis. Gingivitis is the inflammation of the gums, a condition that is reversible if treated. If left untreated, gingivitis can lead to periodontitis, a serious and damaging irreversible form of the disease

CAUSES OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Periodontal disease normally occurs when plaque is not removed on a daily basis. Over the years, plaque builds up and eventually the bacteria found in plaque causes irritation and inflammation of the gums. Periodontal disease affects the bone and soft tissues that support the teeth and as the infection worsens, tooth loss can result.

SIGNS OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Look for these warning signs of periodontal disease:

- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Bleeding while brushing or flossing
- Gums that pull away from the teeth and/or loose or separating teeth
- Red, white or swollen areas in any part of your mouth
- Persistent bad breath

Let your dentist know if you experience any of these signs of gum disease. It is possible to have periodontal disease and not know it, so be sure to visit your dentist regularly. Your dentist can measure the space between your teeth and gums...the more space there is, the more advanced the periodontal disease.

PREVENTING PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Prevention is key! Be sure to brush at least twice a day, floss daily and visit your dentist regularly to make sure that your teeth and gums are healthy. Taking good care of your smile today can promote a healthy mouth and a healthy you tomorrow!

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more “Dental Health 101” tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.