



Gum and Bone Disease

Have you ever wondered what holds your teeth in place? Your teeth are held in place by the jawbone and the gum that surrounds your teeth. In fact, the roots of your teeth are in sockets inside the jawbone and the gums cover over the bone and surround the teeth. This way your teeth are firmly in place, ...UNLESS. Your teeth will be stable when the gums and jawbone are healthy, but when there is gum and bone disease; the teeth will eventually get loose and become painful. In fact, more than 75 % of American adults over the age of 35 have some form of gum and bone, or periodontal, disease. Despite the number of people infected with these diseases, most believe they don't have them. In a recent survey, 8 out of 10 people believed they did not have periodontal diseases, but 7 out of 10 had one or more of the symptoms. These symptoms are:

- Gums that bleed
- Red, swollen, or tender gums
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Pus between the teeth and gums when the gums are gently pressed
- Persistent bad breath or bad taste
- Any change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Permanent teeth that are loose or separating

Your teeth serve three vitally important purposes. First, teeth help give your face its shape and form. Second, they help you to pronounce different sounds clearly. Finally, teeth help you to chew and digest your food and are the first stage of your digestive process.

The cause of gum and bone disease is plaque. The bacteria in plaque create toxins that injure the gums and underlying bone. Over time, these toxins can destroy the gum and bone dissolving the foundation for your teeth and allowing your teeth to get loose and become painful. Dental research is also helping us understand how gum and bone disease affects the rest of your body. For instance, evidence is mounting that suggests people with periodontal disease, may be more at risk for heart disease. These people have nearly twice the risk of having a fatal heart attack, than people without periodontal disease. Also, for years we have known that people with diabetes are more likely to have periodontal disease than people without diabetes. Now research is emerging that indicates that gum and bone disease may make it more difficult for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar. So, controlling your periodontal disease may help you control your diabetes. Finally, research is building that infections in your mouth, like gum and bone disease, are associated with an increased risk of respiratory infections like pneumonia, bronchitis, and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. So, getting control over the health of your mouth will help you get control over the health of your entire body.

Your dentist can help you determine your risk level for gum and bone disease. Your gums can be evaluated for any of the symptoms of periodontal disease. We have a gum ruler we can use to measure the health of the foundation for your teeth and we can assess where the plaque is located and if the gums are bleeding. We can help you understand how to remove the infection from your gums, and how to have more control over your health for the rest of your life. If you catch the disease in time your future looks bright. However, if the disease gets away from you than extensive treatment is necessary and is not fun. Ask anyone you know who had gum surgery how it felt! Creating the level of health you want is a lot more fun.

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