



WellnessBuzz

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Getting to the Root of Gum Disease

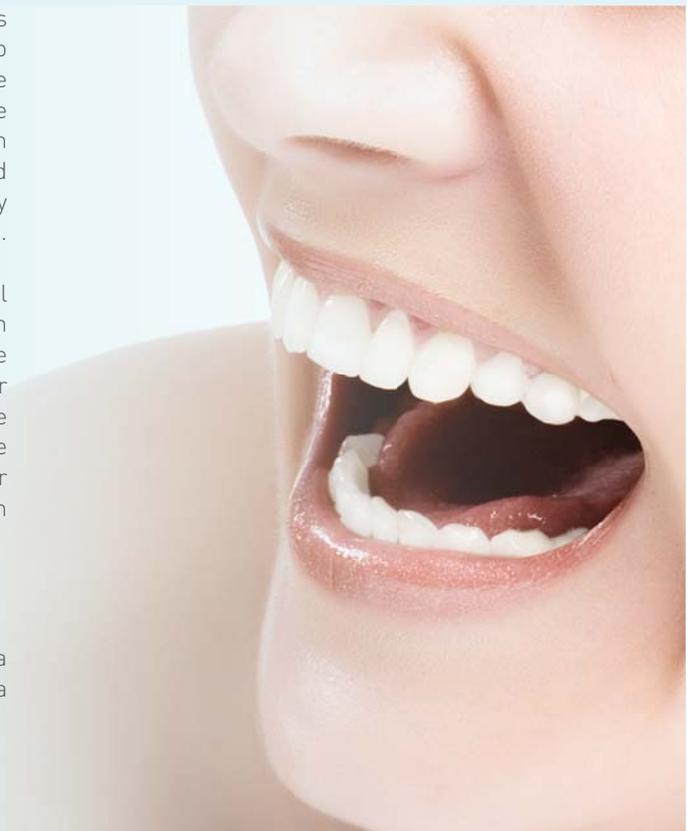
In Singapore, it is widely believed that gum disease cannot be controlled and cured. Gum disease is an infection of the tissues that surround your teeth and is a major cause of tooth loss in adults. With basic knowledge of the early signs of this condition, there might be hope for cure at the root of it all.

Generally, there are two types of patients that dentists commonly meet in their line of work. The first group of patients strongly believe that nothing can be done for their shaky teeth; they were simply waiting for the day when they will have to wear dentures. And then there are those who suffered from bleeding gums and recurrent gum swelling for years, thinking that they had to live with this condition due to their 'weak gums'.

As most gum diseases are caused by bacterial infections, the primary focus of treatment will be on the eradication of the bacteria that is causing the infection. However, in severe infections that occur beneath the gums, a visit to the dentist for routine scaling and polishing will have limited effect on the disease. That is why it is important to look out for the signs of gum disease and seek early treatment in order to find a cure for this condition.

Warning signs of gum disease

An unfortunate fact about gum disease is that it is a silent disease. It is often not painful, and comes with a few subtle signs, which include the following:





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1. Gum redness and swelling

Gums that appear to be red, swollen or tender usually signals the start of early stage gum disease, which is called gingivitis. At this stage, the disease is still reversible and can usually be cured with professional cleaning at the dentist, followed by daily brushing and flossing.

2. Bad breath and bleeding while brushing teeth

For cases of bad breath or gums that bleed while brushing teeth, a visit to the dentist is in order to seek advice and treatment. Should the bleeding gums or bad breath persist or recur despite scaling treatment, or worse, when teeth loss occurs, it is advisable to ask for a referral to see a Specialist Periodontist for further treatment.

Periodontists are dentists who specialise in the treatment of gum disease, and there are currently 36 Ministry of Health accredited Specialist Periodontists in Singapore.

3. Shaky teeth and tooth migration

Teeth that feel loose or gradually shift position in the mouth may be signs of chronic periodontitis. This advanced gum disease can lead to the loss of tissue and bone that support the teeth, and it may become more severe over time.

Dentist's Tip:

Do not ignore tooth loss!

Once tooth loss occurs as a result of gum disease (i.e. tooth extracted because it become very mobile or shaky), it is usually a telltale sign of a severe gum infection. This leads to the spread of bacteria, and other teeth in the mouth will also become infected over time.



Gum disease usually makes its appearance with subtle warning signs that we might miss. But with regular dental check-ups and good oral care at home, gum disease can be effectively cured and prevented from becoming more serious.

Dr Benjamin T.K. Tan is a Ministry of Health (Singapore) accredited Specialist in Periodontology. He specialises in the provision of dental implants, treatment of gum disease, bad breath and periodontal cosmetic surgery. Dr Tan received his training in Periodontology and Dental Implantology at the Eastman Dental Institute, University College London; and obtained his Master of Science and Master of Clinical Dentistry in 2000. He is currently Chairperson of the Chapter of Periodontists, Academy of Medicine Singapore and Dental Specialist Accreditation Committee (Periodontology), Singapore. Dr Tan believes in salvaging natural teeth rather than extracting them, and uses non-surgical and conservative treatment options whenever possible.