

A Patient's Guide To Periodontal Health

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According to the American Dental Association approximately 75% of our over twenty population has periodontal problems

Do your gums bleed? Are they red or puffy? Has your dentist ever told you that you need to brush better or see the hygienist more frequently? If your answer to any of these questions is “yes”, then you have some form of periodontal or gum disease.

What is periodontal disease?

Teeth are not embedded in the jawbones but are totally surrounded by tissue called the periodontal membrane. The tissue acts as a shock absorber for the tooth.

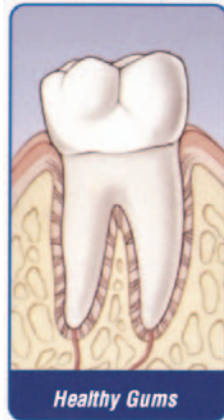
The periodontal membrane is actually a continuation of the gum tissue that covers all the bone and tooth parts in the mouth with the exception of the crown of the tooth (the part we see). The periodontal membrane has thousands of tiny fibers called periodontal ligaments that go from the membrane and attach to the tooth and the bone.

In a normal healthy mouth there is always a slight space between the tooth and the bone called a pocket, which is usually about 1-2mm (about an eighth of an inch).⁽¹⁾

Poor oral hygiene will allow plaque, or hard deposits to form on the teeth. These deposits allow for the growth of bacteria that cause inflammation of the gum tissue. The bacteria also release minute amounts of toxins that help break down the tissue, helping the infection to progress.



As the infection progresses, the gum tissue becomes red instead of its normal healthy pink color and will get puffy. As the infection continues, bleeding will occur, especially when you floss or brush. Bacteria migrate into the pocket and begin to destroy the periodontal membrane. The toxins produced by the bacteria destroy the bone in the immediate area. The



Ten Ways To Prevent Periodontal Disease

- 1. Pay close attention to your diet. Stay away from sugars and fats.
- 2. Take vitamins, minerals and herbs to boost your immune system.
- 3. Maintain a conscientious oral hygiene program that includes brushing your teeth at least twice a day with a soft toothbrush.
- 4. Visit your dentist regularly- every three or four months. Early degenerative diseases can be corrected.
- 5. Eat more high-fiber foods such as fruits and vegetables.
- 6. Massage your gums with your fingers when you get a chance.
- 7. Go on a cleansing diet to eliminate toxins from your body.
- 8. Avoid stress. It encourages the growth of harmful bacteria.
- 9. Take Osteopro to promote good gum health.
- 10. Read up on homeopathic aromatherapy, Bach flower remedies, and other substances that promote healing.

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dependent upon everything else. With the calcium/phosphorus levels being out of balance, the pH changes and since the blood PH must remain a constant, buffer salts are released to counteract the changes. This will throw the other minerals out and so it goes.

Normal blood PH is 7.4. If the blood is slightly acidic, the cells tend to become acidic. Since the body wants the blood to maintain its PH level, alkalinizing minerals will be released to compensate for the tendency towards acidity. Such minerals include calcium, magnesium, potassium and sodium. These minerals are replaced by fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are considered alkaline foods because they are mineral donors. Organic acids from these foods are oxidized into carbon dioxide and water. These products are eliminated through the lungs and kidneys. The alkaline minerals that are left form buffer salts that help to neutralize the acid waste from cell metabolism.

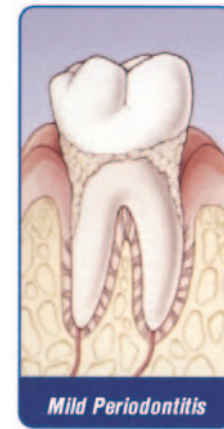
One of the reasons that the detoxification diet mentioned before is so helpful is that it is low on protein. Most people eat between 80 and 120 grams of protein per day. The RDA recommends 60 grams of protein for a male and 50 grams for a female. I believe that numbers should be much lower; 20-30 grams for males and 15-20 grams for females. Excess protein can create problems:

1. It is very acid forming because of the sulfur and phosphorus that are abundant in animal protein. These metabolize into sulfuric and phosphoric acids that need to be neutralized by the body and can deplete the body of minerals needed for other processes.
2. It can change the PH of lymphatic fluids that surround the cells and impair protein synthesis inside the cells.
3. When the body is too acidic, white blood cell production is lowered. This weakens the immune system.

With a weakened immune system, and a body that is in a state of chemical imbalance, something must give. One of the earliest problems that can occur is periodontal disease.

process can be seen by a deepening of the normal healthy pocket from 1 to 2mm to 3 to 4mm and in severe cases 7 to 10mm or more.

The effect of this over a period of time, is that the teeth involved are loosened and will eventually fall out. The supporting structures, (the periodontal ligaments) having been completely destroyed at this stage.⁽²⁾



Periodontal disease can result from mechanical problems, such as grinding or from a person's bite being off. More than normal pressure on a tooth will also cause disintegration of the underlying bone and result in problems. Dental restorations that do not fit properly can also be a factor causing the gum tissue around the restoration to become irritated.⁽³⁾

While these local factors are causes of periodontal problems, they are not the main factors responsible. **Periodontal disease is a symptom of the body being in trouble.**

There are commercials on television that show how all the germs in the mouth are killed when certain mouthwashes are used. Disease is not due to the presence of bacteria, but rather to the body being out of balance in such a way that the bacteria responsible for the inflammation are breeding out of proportion. Killing the bacteria is not the answer. Placing the body back in balance is a much more effective method of treatment.

Stress plays a major part in periodontal disease. High stress levels cause a lowering of the immune system response and will deplete the body of many valuable minerals and vitamins that are needed for general maintenance and repair.

As a dentist I am sorry to say that the mouth is not the most important part of the body and will lose out to other more life supporting parts in the race to have proper nutritional balance. What this means is that the body will take minerals from the jawbones and bring them to other body parts. This results in a weakening of the bone that supports the teeth. Periodontal disease can be thought of as the beginning of osteoporosis.

If your diet is not the best, or stress is present, or you have a combination of both of these factors, the body will react. There are a number of bacteria that live in the mouth, some good, some harmless and some harmful. When you're healthy, the bacterial populations are in balance. Your immune system has no problem dealing with this low level of harmful bacteria. When your general health starts to change for the worse, the mouth chemistry changes. Minerals in saliva tend to precipitate out and form deposits on the base of the teeth. These mineral deposits are called plaque. The harmful bacteria are now finding that the mouth, is a great place to breed and they start to increase in number. The deposits of plaque tend to protect the bacteria which lodge in the pockets around the teeth and the infection process begins.

Treatment for Periodontal Disease

Traditional treatment involves surgical removal of the infected tissue and antibiotics.. Surgery is a very painful and expensive procedure that many people will need to have redone within five years because it removes the symptom rather than the cause. The problem with antibiotics is that a person can become sensitized to the antibiotic; the weaker bacteria are killed off while the stronger bacteria become resistant to the antibiotic.

There are other methods to control periodontal disease that are safer, less expensive and more natural. **While periodontal disease has generally been considered a local problem, holistic methods of treatment, with the help of modern medical research, are showing that this is not the case.**

Research is showing infection and inflammation caused by periodontal disease as significantly increasing the risk for coronary heart disease.⁽⁵⁾ In the Sept 1997 Journal of British Medicine, research showed that there can be a causal relationship between periodontal disease and an increase in heart problems. In some of

Saliva is the more determining factor of the two. If your saliva is acidic but your urine is not, you still should consider yourself acidic.

Saliva is a good indicator of what is happening inside the body. Salivary PH is indicative of alkaline mineral reserves. This is especially important in periodontal disease because balancing body chemistry is the main factor for restoring health. After eating, saliva PH should rise to 7.8 or higher. If you are not achieving this type of PH rise, try and remove foods that are acid producing such as meats and whole wheat. Refer to the detoxification diet.

Urinary PH reflects the bodies building and tearing down cycles, through buffer salts and hormones. Start with the second urination of the day. The upon rising urine should be discarded. Urine should be within a PH of 6.0 - 7.5.

Please Note: whenever you are checking your urine or saliva, its important to remember that this is a reflection of what foods you are putting into your body. Assuming there are no medical problems, changing your diet will cause changes in the PH levels .

If you are on the detoxification diet and are still having problems with an acidic PH (the paper is too yellow) try using cell salts. The homeopathic remedy Natrum Phosphoricum is excellent for producing alkaline shifts.⁽¹⁵⁾ Natrum Phosphoricum will help change lactic acid to carbonic acid and water. Natrum Phosphoricum is also necessary for dissolving uric acid in the blood.

If you are to alkaline (the paper is too green), eat acid forming foods such as Brown rice, lentils, tomatoes, whole grains, seeds and vinegars.

If your urine is to acidic, again try the detox diet mentioned before. Carrot, spinach and celery juice are a healthy way to reduce acidity. If you are find that you are too alkaline, eating the acid forming foods mentioned above, will help.

Mineral imbalances in the saliva are reflections of the problems of the blood. This is why an analysis of blood can be very helpful in treating periodontal patients. Eating sugar changes the relationship of calcium to phosphorus, with the calcium rising and the phosphorus decreasing. The key to remember is that if one part is off, everything is off. Each mineral is

Supplements that will help periodontal problems:

the populations studied the likelihood of getting heart disease doubled when periodontal problems are present.⁽⁶⁾

Most dental problems are the result of nutritional deficiencies.

Scaling and root planing are necessary to break up the mats of bacteria, remove most calculus adhering to the teeth. No matter what procedures are used all the calculus is never removed. When debris and bacteria are taken away, the area can be kept clean and healthy by repeated irrigations. The best way is to change the chemistry of the body (and the mouth) so that the bacterial populations are changed back to normal healthy populations. ⁽¹²⁾

Home care is the most important part of the entire process. Repeated treatments are successful only if you do what is required on a daily basis to facilitate the removal of the diseased state.

Changing the Body's Chemistry Through Diet

While being too alkaline can result in disease, most problems seem to come from being too acidic. Monitoring changes through saliva and urine PH is an effective way of determining your acid/base level. The PH is a number that will tell whether something is acid or basic (alkaline). The PH levels are from 1 to 14 with 1-6.9 being acidic, 7.0 being neutral and 7.1-14 being alkaline or basic. While blood PH is a little more complicated, saliva and urine PH are relatively easy to determine. For saliva, this can be done with litmus paper from a drugstore. PH paper can be ordered from Micro Essential Laboratory 718-338-3618

Check your saliva by spitting on the paper and recording the numbers. The PH test strips that you can purchase will come with a color-coded PH chart. Matching the colors will let you see how acidic your saliva is. Saliva should be neutral (13) or very slightly acidic (6.9- 7.1). If you test below 6.9, you probably have an acidic condition.

There are test strips that you can buy that are specific for urine and are easy to read. Check your urine every few hours by dipping the paper in a sample (1/2 cup) and record the numbers. This will enable you to chart how acidic or alkaline you are. Urine PH will vary, but usually it will be between 7.0 and 5.5.(14)

Recommended Periodontal Protocol

- A discussion of your general health, followed by temporomandibular joint testing and a thorough oral examination.
- Deep cleansing of teeth; cleansing of pockets between the teeth and gums, scaling of teeth, root planing, and tooth polishing.
- Discussion of gum problems encountered, their causes, and healing options.
- Recommended diet.
- Recommended supplements
- Review of problems, diet, and supplements.
- Most effective use of dental floss and toothbrush.
- Most effective use of irrigator.

Using natural healing ways to change the body's basic chemistry to a more healthy state is a much better method of therapy than either drug induced changes or surgical procedures. By helping patients to have better nutritional habits, and realizing that periodontal disease is a warning symptom, Holistic Dentistry can make inroads into reducing major problems before they occur.

Diet & Supplementation to Assist in Healing Periodontal Disease

While non-surgical periodontal therapy is based on each individual patient's needs, here are some things you can do:

1. Diet analysis - This involves writing down everything you eat including the time and how much. For example, if you're having eggs and toast for breakfast just writing down eggs and toast is not sufficient. Breakfast may be two eggs fried in butter with toasted white bread, filled with cream cheese and jam. Followed by two cups of coffee; no juice or vitamins. By keeping a complete record of what you are eating a few things happen:

- o You become aware of what you eat
- o You see how much you eat (most people are shocked at the amount of food they consume)
- o You see when you eat

Many problems with health can arise due to habitual eating habits. For instance, if you are eating a high protein meal shortly before bedtime, you can easily put yourself into an acid condition. This will lead to a shift in your mineral balance and could cause a host of health problems.

2. Go on a detoxification diet. If there are no medical problems that would require this be modified, a detoxification diet is the following:

Breakfast

Fruit - any type

Lunch - Monday, Wednesday and Friday

1 or 2 types of fresh fruit in season (berries, pineapple, apples, pears, grapes, peaches etc.)

OR apricots

OR figs, currants (dried fruit may be soaked)

AND avocado

Lunch - Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday

Small RAW vegetable salad (must have romaine lettuce and sprouts plus two or three other vegetables)

AND avocado or rice cakes or three ounces of raw nuts (almonds, filberts, walnuts, pecans)

Dinner

Monday - Large RAW vegetable salad and baked potato or lentils or chickpeas. And, if needed, one steamed vegetable (cabbage, asparagus, broccoli, brussel sprouts, etc.)

Tuesday - Large RAW vegetable salad and baked yam or avocado.

Wednesday - Large RAW vegetable salad and baked potato or corn or lentils. And, if needed, one steamed vegetable.

Thursday - Large RAW vegetable salad and avocado or beans (garbanzo, fava, mung)

Friday - Large RAW vegetable salad and baked potato or corn or lentils. And, if needed, one steamed vegetable.

Saturday - Large RAW vegetable salad and brown rice and beans and lightly steamed diced vegetables.

Sunday - Large RAW vegetable salad and six ounces of ricotta cheese or pot cheese or cottage cheese. And, if needed, one steamed vegetable.

Dressings - lemon juice and oil and dulse or kelp.

If you cannot modify your diet 100%, come as close as possible. The more you do, the better you will feel and eventually, you will be able to enjoy this diet. Remember this is only for a month! After one month you may use this as a guide and add other foods. This diet will allow the body to become alkaline in a short period of time.