

English 182 Summary

Directions: Read and summarize the article below. Do not use information from the introduction, except for what is necessary for the topic sentence. Your final draft must be double spaced and completed in blue or black ink pen. You have 75 minutes in which to complete the in-course summary.

What is Gum Disease?

By Kerry V. Cooke

Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, is an inflammation in the gums, bone, and tissues that surround and support the teeth. Gum disease is most likely to affect adults over 30, although anyone is at risk. In the United States, about 66% of young adults, 80% of middle-aged people, and 90% of people older than 65 have some form of gum disease. The form and severity of gum disease may vary depending on how gum tissues react to plaque and bacteria. It can affect all or part of the gums.

Several factors play a role in the development of gum disease. By far the most common controllable factor is the presence of bacterial plaque, which is a sticky, colorless film produced by normal oral bacteria. If a person does not remove plaque daily by brushing and flossing, the toxins released by those oral bacteria will break down the natural fibers that hold the gums to the teeth, allowing even more bacteria and toxins to invade. As this process continues, the affected tooth, tooth root, and jawbone may all be damaged or entirely destroyed by decay. Furthermore, when plaque remains on the teeth, it quickly hardens into calculus or tartar, a rough, porous substance that further irritates the gums. If the disease progresses to this point, even diligent and vigorous brushing and flossing cannot remove the hard tartar. In addition to the problems caused by poor oral health habits, smoking also irritates the gum tissue. Smokers are more likely than non-smokers to have calculus form on the teeth, have deeper pockets between the teeth and gums, and lose more of the bone and tissue that support the teeth. These factors all lead to the deterioration of gum tissue. When this happens, periodontal pockets form and fill with disease-causing bacteria. If left untreated, gum disease will progress and worsen. Aside from these factors, some people inherit a tendency toward developing gum disease. These people are simply born with a diminished resistance to gum disease and therefore are unable to avoid the problem, even by taking various preventative measures.

Healthy gums are pink and firm, fit snugly around the teeth, and do not bleed easily. Symptoms of early-stage gum disease, or gingivitis, are red or swollen gums that may be tender and bleed easily when brushed or flossed. Because gingivitis usually does not cause pain, many people mistakenly delay treatment. With care it can be reversed. Advanced gum disease, or periodontitis, develops if the disease progresses. If this happens, the symptoms worsen and

affect more than the gums. Symptoms of periodontitis may include gums that bleed during brushing, persistent bad breath that will not go away with proper dental care, or gums that pull away from the teeth. It is also characterized by pus coming from the gums, pus between the teeth and gums, and loose teeth or teeth that fall out.

Early treatment of gum disease is very important. The goals of treatment are to prevent gum disease from permanently damaging tissues, control any infection, and prevent tooth loss. Effective treatment depends on the patient's willingness to keep his/her teeth clean with effective brushing and flossing. The basic treatment of gum disease includes frequent brushing and flossing of the teeth. Treatment for gingivitis includes dentist visits twice a year to have plaque and tartar removed from the teeth and using mouthwash containing chlorhexidine, which kills plaque. Antibiotics are also necessary to relieve the pain and swelling caused by infection. Following these treatment methods can generally reverse early-stage gum disease. However, if the condition worsens to periodontitis, prompt dental treatment to eliminate infection and then long-term care is needed to restore oral health. Treatment of periodontitis involves scraping the plaque and calculus off the roots of the teeth. This procedure is called scaling. Once completed, it makes it harder for plaque to stick to the teeth. If the patient's condition has not improved after scaling, s/he may require surgical treatment. A variety of surgical procedures may be performed to clean the roots of a tooth, repair bone damage, or remove loose or severely damaged teeth.

In conclusion, gum disease is a fairly common condition. It is usually caused by bacteria and characterized by bleeding of the gums. In most cases, gum disease can be treated easily. However, if the condition worsens and the symptoms persist, then surgical treatment may be necessary. The condition can usually be prevented by brushing regularly in the morning, after meals and snacks, and before going to sleep. Flossing once a day and visiting the dentist for regular check ups and teeth cleaning is also very beneficial in preventing gum disease.