# Diabetes and Periodontal (Gum) Disease

Periodontal disease means disease around a tooth. It is usually a long-standing infection that affects the gums and bones supporting the teeth. Those with poorly controlled diabetes are more likely to have periodontal disease, and infection makes diabetes harder to control. Periodontal (gum) diseases, if left untreated, can lead to tooth loss. Periodontal disease can affect one tooth or many teeth. It begins when the bacteria in plaque, which builds up on your teeth, causes the gums to become inflamed.

Gingivitis is a mild form of the disease in which the gums redden, swell and bleed easily. There is usually little or no discomfort. Gingivitis is often caused by poor tooth, gum and mouth cleaning (*oral hygiene*). Gingivitis is reversible with professional treatment and good oral hygiene.

## CAUSES OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE

The main cause of periodontal disease is tooth plaque. This is what is removed from your teeth when they are cleaned. Other factors affecting the health of your gums are:

- Diabetes. It makes it harder to fight infections.
- Smoking and tobacco.
- Genetics. This means you may have inherited this from your parents.
- Hormonal changes of puberty and pregnancy.
- Stress.
- Clenching or grinding your teeth.
- Poor nutrition.
- Diseases that interfere with the body's protection system (*immune system*).

## TREATMENT OF PERIDONTAL DISEASE

- Good oral hygiene is the best treatment for periodontal disease.
- Floss and brush at least daily.
- Good blood glucose (*sugar*) control.
- See your dentist regularly, at least 2 times per year.
- Stop smoking.
- If regular and improved hygiene does not improve the condition, you may require a referral to a specialist.
- Sometimes, surgery becomes a necessary part of treatment.

## SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your gums are red, swollen or bleed easily.
- You are having problems keeping your blood glucose in your goal range.
- You develop a fever of more than 100.5 F (38.1 C).

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