

In this brochure:

- Difference between periodontal maintenance and regular dental cleanings
- Ways to keep your mouth clean after maintenance
- What can happen if you do not follow your recommended periodontal maintenance plan

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth daily.
- Eat a healthy diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks.
- See your dentist regularly for prevention and treatment of oral disease.

For more information about taking care of your mouth and teeth, visit MouthHealthy.org, the ADA's website just for patients.



Produced in cooperation with the American Academy of Periodontology

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Periodontal Maintenance

Stay on top of gum disease



ADA American Dental Association®
America's leading advocate for oral health

Your dentist or hygienist may recommend that you use a mouthrinse and/or powered toothbrush. Look for the **American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance** on all dental care products. The ADA Seal tells you that the product meets ADA standards for safety and effectiveness.



Your oral health affects your overall health

- **Gum disease is common in people with diabetes and heart disease.** Strokes and high stress also may be related to gum disease.
- **Diseases that affect the whole body** — such as diabetes and HIV — can lower your body's ability to fight infections. This can allow gum disease to quickly get worse.
- **Do not use tobacco in any form.** Smoking, chewing, vaping and dipping puts you at a higher risk for cancer and other life-threatening diseases. Tobacco use also can make gum disease worse and make it harder to treat it. If you use tobacco, ask your dentist or physician for information about how to quit.



Do your part and work with your dental team

With the help of your dental team, you don't have to lose your teeth to gum disease! Periodontal maintenance is most effective if you and your dental team work together.

Your dentist has treated your gum disease, but you must also do your part and take good care of your teeth and gums at home every day.

Is treatment covered by my dental benefits plan?

Check with your dental plan when you are planning treatment with your dental office.

However, you should **make treatment decisions based on what's best for your health, not just what is covered by your plan.**

If your treatment is not fully covered by insurance, ask the dental office if it has a payment plan to cover the rest. Keep in mind that having periodontal treatment now may be less expensive than replacing a tooth lost to disease!

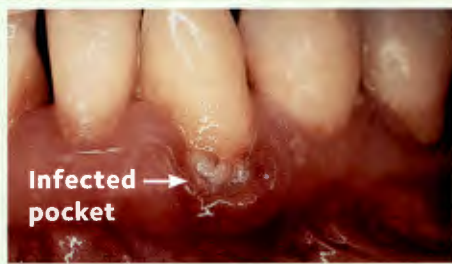


You will need more visits to your dentist

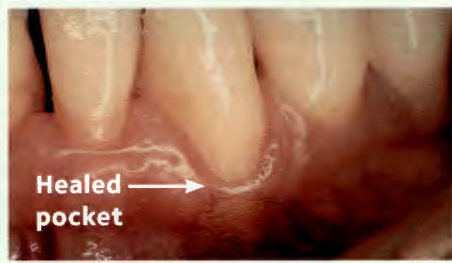
You will need more frequent dental visits than people without gum disease. Problems like pockets make it harder for you to clean plaque from your teeth on your own. Your dentist will recommend a treatment schedule that is based on your diagnosis. Be sure to keep all dental appointments.

Your visits may also switch between your dentist and a **periodontist (perry-o-DON-tist)** — a dentist who specializes in the treatment of gum disease. A periodontist is also well versed in the surgical treatment of gum disease.

If you follow through with your maintenance, you are more likely to keep your teeth. If not, your gum disease may get worse. You may or may not feel pain as a sign that the gum disease is getting worse.



Before treatment



After treatment

Your teeth and gums may be sensitive

Your teeth and gums may be sensitive after your treatment. This soreness may make you want to avoid cleaning the treated areas. But **it's important to follow your dentist's instructions on home care!** If plaque is not removed, **root decay** may form. Talk with your dentist or hygienist if a special toothpaste or other treatments can lower your tooth sensitivity.



Keep brushing and flossing!

Brushing and cleaning between your teeth are important for everyone, but even more so if you have gum disease. You should brush your teeth 2 times a day with a toothpaste that contains **fluoride**.



Use floss or some other between-the-teeth cleaner every day to remove the plaque and bits of food between your teeth and gums. If your gums have pulled away from your teeth, special brushes and wider types of floss and picks may be good choices for you.

Periodic periodontal cleanings help you stay on top of gum disease

If you have **periodontal (perry-o-DON-tal) disease** (also called **gum disease**), you may already have had a special deep cleaning called **scaling and root planing**. You also may have had **periodontal surgery**. The periodic cleanings recommended after these treatments are called **periodontal maintenance care**.

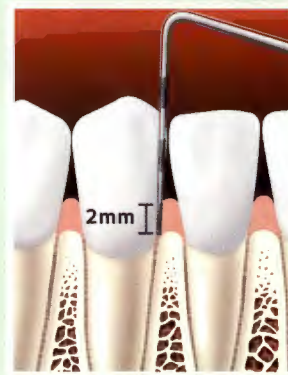
The purpose of these cleanings is to help you keep your gums healthy and make sure that gum disease does not get worse.

Your gum disease won't go away on its own

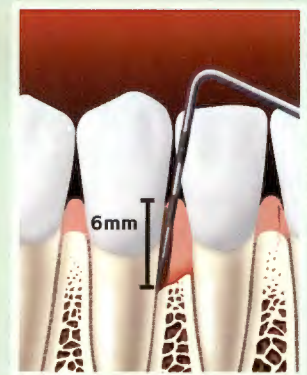
Once your gum disease is brought under control, it is very important that you get dental care on a periodic basis.

Cleaning your mouth every day at home is a must, but it's not enough on its own to keep your gum disease under control. Professional dental care is needed to help control gum disease.

Periodontal maintenance involves a cleaning that is deeper than a regular cleaning in the dental office. You need deeper cleanings because spaces have formed between your teeth and gums. These spaces are called **periodontal pockets** and they create a space for bacteria to collect more plaque bacteria. The deeper the pocket, the worse your gum disease may be.



Periodontal probe of healthy gums.



Periodontal probe showing a pocket forming between the tooth root and the gums.

It's these bacteria that cause your teeth and gums to be infected. Your body reacts to the bacteria and your gums can become red, puffy, swollen and no longer tightly hug your teeth. It can also create bone loss, which causes your teeth to become loose or fall out.

With periodic maintenance, the amount of plaque bacteria is lowered. Then, the inflammation can get better, pockets can shrink and your gums can become healthier.

Once gums are healthy, periodic cleanings can help keep them infection-free. Your dentist may also recommend and use medicines to help lower the periodontal bacteria in your mouth.



Oral irrigation keeps your pockets clean after scaling and root planing.

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