



*Aloha and Welcome to the
Fascinating World of Periodontal Therapy*

What is periodontal (gum) disease? Periodontal Disease is the inflammation and destruction of the gums and bone that surround your teeth.

What causes it? Not brushing and flossing- right? Absolutely - But why??
Because, you're not getting the plaque off of your teeth.

What's Plaque? Bugs! Not food, not debris, not deposits. Living bacteria. Yeasty Beasties that are in your mouth all of the time.

Then What? In most people, the fight between the bugs and the body occurs primarily in the gum tissue with the only resulting problem being inflammation of the gums. This is called **Gingivitis**. It's not good but it's not terrible. Other people aren't so lucky. In susceptible individuals, the battle spreads into the bone underneath the gums and the bone is destroyed. This is called **Periodontitis**. It is definitely not good. Unfortunately, you have it. Fortunately, you can do something about it.

Life is not fair! Not everybody gets Periodontitis. Not everybody has to brush and floss effectively to keep from losing bone. You see, two things are necessary for Periodontitis to occur: one is plaque and the other is susceptibility (and you're susceptible). If you get the bugs off the teeth once each day, you can control the disease. And it's not just your teeth that are at risk. Research has established that the inflammatory process associated with periodontal disease is linked to more serious illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, strokes, ulcers, pneumonia, premature birth, and low birth weight. Good oral hygiene may not only save your teeth - it may save your life!

Is only ONCE a day enough? Yes!! It takes bacteria about 24 hours to re-colonize on your teeth. So, if you brush and floss once a day effectively you can maintain health. Do it more often for your mouth to feel clean and your breath to smell fresh but do it at least once a day -**THOROUGHLY** - for health.

Is there a secret to good home care? Sorry, no secret. And it's not all that easy either. But you can learn how! It may take several appointments so don't get discouraged. If you stick with it, you'll get there. **Here are a few tips:**

Make home care a habit by doing it at the same time everyday. There may be some added benefit to doing it before bed but the key is consistency, so make it the most convenient time for you. In the shower, after breakfast, after lunch, after exercise, after dinner, before bed, in bed—**same time, EVERYDAY.** No excuses. Just do it!

Be systematic. Learn your way around your mouth. Imagine you're trying to clean a bunch of ivory pegs (your teeth) sticking out of two horseshoes (your jaws) that are inside a jar (your head).

FOCUS! Pay attention to what you're doing, where you're doing it and if you're being effective! This could be the most important tip of all!!

Which brushing technique should I use? Good question. Get a hold of this:

- **There is no “Right” or “Wrong” way to brush!** It doesn't matter how you get the bugs off. Just get them off. Nevertheless, here are a few tips:
- **Use a soft brush.** A hard one can damage the gums. You need to be thorough but not forceful.
- **Make sure you get the area where the tooth meets the gum.** Don't use the same stroke every time - go in different motions. Pretend you're scrubbing mold off of tile - but remember - don't press too hard, just be thorough.
- **Spend longer on the insides and in the back.** Spend at least twice as much time on the insides and the back because these are the most difficult sites to get clean. Watch yourself in the mirror to help make sure you're reaching **“where the tooth meets the gum!”**
- **Consider investing in a quality electric toothbrush.** They're not essential, however, most people do a better job with them. See the last page of this handout for more information.
- **Don't forget to brush your tongue.** It really helps “freshen up”. Consider using a tongue scraper to be even more effective.

Make sure you get the area where the tooth meets the gums. Yes, this is the third time we've said this. Adults learn by repetition ☺

Have your hygienist check how you're doing by staining your teeth with red dye. Nobody can assess your effectiveness unless they stain your teeth with disclosing solution. The value of this assessment cannot be overstated.

How about flossing? It's no fun, but it is necessary. The bacterial battle is mostly fought in between the teeth where the toothbrush won't reach so you've got to get those bugs off. Proper flossing must be demonstrated in the dental office but here are a few tips:

- Sea-saw back and forth to get through where the teeth touch. Go down gently into the gums but never gouge them. Be nice!
- Wrap the floss around the tooth in a C-shape and put firm pressure against the tooth. Be mean!
- Each time you go between two teeth, rub the sides of **BOTH** of them.
- Try to make the floss touch as much tooth surface as possible. You can do this by keeping your fingers closer together, instead of far apart, as you push back or pull forward.
- If flossing is difficult for you, consider using a floss aid. The new Reach by Johnson & Johnson is excellent.
- If you have missing teeth, gauze can work better than floss! Ask for a demo. Have a dentist or hygienist evaluate your technique.

Anything else I can do? How did you guess! Perhaps the most beneficial aid for people with gum disease is a small brush used in between the teeth called a **Proxabrush**. You simply must try it. You'll love it! It will help you keep your teeth!
Some tips:

- Only use it in spaces where it goes through relatively easy. Don't force it.
- Consider using a thin toothpick in the tighter spots.
- Make sure you're moving it in and out as much as you can, with pressure against the sides of the teeth. Friction is good!
- When you are effective at using it from the outside, try going through from the inside.
- Become a fanatic. Have one at the office, in the car, in your purse, in your briefcase. Use it while you're watching TV, in the shower, or wherever.
- Dip the proxabrush in Chlorhexidine (Peridex) for additional benefit.

Anything else? Although it is the least critical element, the WaterPik is a useful adjunct. See the back page for more information.

Whew! That's a lot to do. How long should it take? Well, at first, it may take a while. But shoot for efficiency. With practice you should be able to do it all in 10-12 minutes maximum. No kidding!!

What else do I need to know? Smoking causes more bone loss at a faster rate and limits the potential for healing. Of course, it also causes lung cancer, heart disease and emphysema. So if you smoke, do yourself and your teeth a **BIG FAVOR**.....

What does periodontal treatment usually involve? Good question. Up until now, we've primarily dealt with your oral hygiene. This takes care of the bugs above the gums. In a healthy mouth, the gums are firmly attached to the tooth with very little space in between. But when you have Periodontitis (gum disease), bone has been lost creating spaces or "pockets" between the tooth and gums. It is the Periodontist's and the Hygienist's job to clean these pockets below the gums.

There are basically two approaches. One consists primarily of "deep cleaning" to try and detoxify the contaminated root surfaces under your gums. This technique is very good for when the "pocket"- or space between the tooth and the gum is relatively shallow. It can be done with or without anesthesia (an injection in the mouth) depending on the patient's level of tolerance. Typically, it is better to use anesthesia so the patient is completely comfortable during the procedure.

The more bone that has been destroyed, the deeper the pockets are and the harder it is to clean. It's always easier to clean what you can see so when the pockets are deep, ideal treatment consists of reflecting the gum tissue back so we can visualize the root surfaces. This second approach is referred to as periodontal surgery. However, it is a relatively benign procedure. In addition to facilitating the cleaning of roots, this approach allows us to attempt to "grow back" new bone. In more involved cases, it is far more effective than deep cleaning.

Ideal hygiene on a daily basis and regular maintenance cleaning are essential for proper healing. Following treatment, the quality of the outcome is determined by two factors - your level of home care and regular maintenance cleanings. Most periodontal patients require cleanings every 3 months! The time frame can vary but for the majority of people, 3 month maintenance is the name of the game! The importance of maintenance therapy cannot be overstated. Remember, you never get rid of gum disease. You cannot "cure it"- you can only keep it "in check". So you have to brace for the long haul, which essentially means the rest of your life! It's your disease. You are the co-therapist. Together we can get it under control and keep it that way. Remember, the inflammatory process associated with periodontal disease has been linked to more serious illness. A healthy mouth is a part of a healthy life!!

A very small percentage of people are effective at oral homecare. It is a skill that requires guidance and determination. But the benefits are enormous and well worth the effort. All it ultimately takes is a commitment.

We are Here to Help You Become One of the Elite Few who

Master the Art of Oral Hygiene!

Homecare

DON'T JUST BRUSH YOUR TEETH. CLEAN YOUR MOUTH!!

Ultimately, there is no “right or wrong” way but the following approach is suggested:

- ∞ **BRUSH FIRST.** Brush your teeth, the roof of your mouth, and your tongue!
Brush your whole mouth. Make sure you brush where the tooth meets the gums! A soft manual toothbrush is okay but most patients do better with an electric brush.
 - ε SONICARE – My personal favorite!
 - ε INTERPLAK- Use GEL TOOTHPASTE ONLY with the InterPlak. This is a good brush if you have large spaces between your teeth.
 - ε BRAUN/ ORALB-3D- Small round head. A great brush if you're okay with a small round head. Additionally, there is an attachment for in between your teeth.

∞ **TONGUE SCRAPER-** Try It - if you use it for a week, you'll never quit©

∞ **FLOSS/ GAUZE/ STIMUDENT**

- ε Floss- Glide Floss is excellent. The Reach Floss Aid is good if you don't want to use your fingers.
- ε Gauze- Johnson & Johnson Sterile Rolled Gauze 2 inch wide. Use behind the back teeth and where there are spaces. Cut it down the middle and fold once or use entire width and fold twice. This requires a little effort but nothing works better.
- ε Stimudent- Johnson & Johnson- available online at drugstores.com

∞ **WATERPIK-** We suggest the Hydrofloss unit. It creates a magnetic charge on the minerals in tap water, which helps remove the bacteria from the root surface. If you can tolerate the taste, try adding 1 tsp of Clorox bleach in 300 ml of water. If it is too strong, try less bleach or just plain water. Make sure you flush the bleach out of your unit to minimize corrosion. Use the WaterPik everyday but I suggest only adding bleach every other day. Use the WaterPik before the Proxabrush.

∞ **PROXABRUSH-** The most important element! As a rule, it's to be used only on the back teeth. Use it from the outside for sure, and the inside if possible. Dip the brush in Chlorhexidine Rinse. **EACH TIME YOU GO IN!!!** Then you're placing bug killer in between the teeth on a daily basis. Make sure you do this step after you WaterPik so you don't rinse the Chlorhexidine away. You can also use a fluoride gel instead of Chlorhexidine. There are various sizes of brushes available.

Remember, shoot for efficiency.

10-12 minutes-same time everyday!!