



## Preventing Gum Disease

### Firstly, let us give you some background information.....

■ Gum disease is caused by '**Dental Plaque**', the soft white sticky film of bacteria that continually grows on the surfaces of the teeth. The plaque irritates the gum making them red and swollen and can also affect the bone supporting the teeth in some cases. Plaque hardens to become '**Tartar**'.

■ If only the gums are affected this is called '**Gingivitis**' and is reversible.

■ If the deeper bony support around the teeth is affected, this is called '**Periodontitis**', and can lead to loosening of the teeth and possibly eventual tooth loss. Although the bone already lost to the disease process will not grow back, periodontitis can be prevented to halt further loss of the bony support.

■ Although gum disease is extremely common, as it is usually painless many people are often unaware they have a problem. The only clue you may have is blood appearing on the toothbrush when you brush, or in the water when you spit out. Also, people close to you may notice your breath is not as fresh as it should be.

### So – how can gum disease be prevented? Here are our '**Top Tips**':

- ✓ **TOP TIP 1: Brush thoroughly twice a day.** This may sound obvious, but although most people try hard to brush well, small amounts of plaque are often left on the teeth, and these deposits can cause problems. We would strongly recommend that you use an **electric toothbrush** (e.g. 'Oral-B Braun, or 'Sonicare'). Use short side to side movements, and make sure you can feel the bristles on the gumline. Keep going for at least 2 minutes! Don't worry if the gums bleed at first - remember it's the plaque causing them to do this - the cleaner the teeth become, the healthier they gums will be and the less they'll bleed.
- ✓ **TOP TIP 2: Clean between the teeth daily.** However thorough you are with the toothbrush, the bristles don't reach between the teeth. Plaque collects here and causes problems. We recommend you use '**TePe interdental brushes**' to remove it. These are small bottle brushes that are quick and easy to use. They come in a range of sizes – you could try red or blue sizes as a starting point. Better still - ask your dentist or hygienist to individually assess your mouth and advise which widths of brush suit you the best.
- ✓ **TOP TIP 3: Brush your tongue each day.** A good amount of plaque grows on the tongue. If you give it a quick once over with the toothbrush, you will help reduce the overall amount of plaque in your mouth.
- ✓ **TOP TIP 4: Don't smoke.** The chemicals in tobacco are very damaging to the gums. Smokers are between three and six times more likely to suffer from gum disease than non-smokers, and smoking may be responsible for more than half the cases of gum disease in the UK. Do your gums a favour and stub it out!
- ✓ **TOP TIP 5: Visit your dentist or hygienist regularly.** We carry out regular 'gum screening' to monitor the health of your gums. We can remove any hard tartar deposits that may be helping plaque to accumulate. We can also make sure you are cleaning your teeth thoroughly, and offer advice if appropriate. Sometimes basic treatment is not sufficient at getting the gum disease under control, so we can also advise whether more frequent visits, or more advanced treatment may be required.

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