

I Have Periodontal Disease: What Happens Next?

If you've recently been diagnosed with periodontal disease, you probably have some questions about your treatment. Be assured that periodontists believe that periodontal therapy should be achieved in the least invasive and most cost-effective way possible; this includes non-surgical therapy.



Remember that the first step toward good oral health begins with proper oral hygiene. This includes brushing your teeth at least twice each day and flossing at least once each day. Good oral hygiene along with regular visits to a dental professional, such as a periodontist, can go a long way toward preventing certain forms of periodontal disease and reversing gingivitis, an early stage of periodontal disease.

If you have more significant disease, you may require an in-depth cleaning called scaling and root planing (SRP). SRP is a careful cleaning of the tooth root surfaces to remove plaque from pockets and to remove bacteria and toxins from the tooth root. Research has consistently shown that SRP reduces inflammation of the gums and reduces the amount of bacteria associated with periodontal disease. Due to these positive findings, SRP is usually the first mode of treatment recommended for most patients. In fact, many people do not require any further active treatment after SRP.

In some cases, systemic antibiotics (antibiotics that are taken by mouth) are prescribed at the time of SRP to help control bacteria levels. However, each time you take an antibiotic you increase your chance of developing drug resistant bacteria. Therefore, it is very important to take antibiotics only when necessary. Instead of a systemic antibiotic, your periodontist may prescribe a local delivery antimicrobial, medication that is delivered directly into periodontal pockets to control or kill periodontal bacteria. In general, local delivery antimicrobials do not lead to antibiotic resistance.

Following adequate time to respond to your treatment, you will be asked to return to your periodontist to determine if further treatment is necessary. If you need further treatment, your periodontist, in collaboration with your general dentist will develop a treatment plan to help restore your smile to a state of health. If you don't need further treatment, you'll enter into a maintenance phase. These appointments are usually more thorough than traditional six-month cleanings and may occur more often, which will help protect the health of your teeth and gums.

Surgical Treatment

When periodontal disease is more advanced, resulting in damaged gum tissue and/or bone loss, surgical solutions can be used to restore tissue and/or bone. These procedures are rapidly improving with ongoing advances in biotechnology and your periodontist will discuss which technique is best for you.