

Dentist-Patient Discussion Guide



According to a national survey, **72% of U.S. adults age 30+ diagnosed with gum disease** report having never discussed gum health with a dental care provider prior to their diagnosis. That means by the time they talked to their dental care provider about gum health, and gum disease specifically, it was only after they already were diagnosed with the chronic infection, which would be with them for life.

That's why it's crucial to start conversations early. To help navigate these discussions with your dentist or hygienist, here are some questions to consider asking during your next visit.

Questions to Ask Your Dentist



1. What are the warning signs of gum disease I should watch out for?
2. Sometimes my gums bleed when I brush/floss, do I have gum disease?
3. If I have great oral hygiene habits (brush/floss regularly), am I still at risk of gum disease?
4. What is the difference between gingivitis and gum disease?
6. Do I have any lifestyle factors or systemic conditions that increase my risk of gum disease?
7. What should I be doing to prevent gum disease?
8. I know I have gum disease, what can I do on my own to minimize the damage to my gums?
9. Can gum disease be cured?
10. How often should I have dental check-ups?

Key Terms



Gingivitis

The earliest stage of gum disease, which is reversible. It happens when plaque and bacteria build up on your teeth and cause infection. Common symptoms include red, swollen, bleeding gums.

Periodontitis

If allowed to progress untreated, gingivitis can advance to periodontitis, an advanced form of gum disease. It's a chronic, irreversible infection that requires management and ongoing monitoring. Periodontitis can have serious consequences such as bleeding gums, tooth loss and chronic bad breath.

Gum pockets

If a gum infection is not managed, the gums can begin to detach, creating pockets of diseased tissue between the teeth and gums. As the pocket deepens, bacteria can spread and permanently damage the bone and gums that support the teeth. Teeth can become loose or may need to be removed.

Whether you have been diagnosed with gum disease or want to be more informed about your oral health, stay in the know and ask your dentist or hygienist about gum disease during your next visit.