

# Patient Education Handout



## What causes Periodontal Disease?

Periodontal (gum) disease is an infection caused by bacteria. In about a days time, mouth bacteria multiply and form a sticky, almost invisible, film on the teeth called plaque. Plaque that is not removed by regular brushing and flossing, can harden into calculus (tartar). In some cases the plaque and calculus cause the gums to become red and inflamed and may bleed on brushing. This condition is called gingivitis. Over time, toxins (poisons) in plaque can cause the tooth supporting tissue and bone to be destroyed (bone loss), forming a hidden pocket between the tooth and the gum. Your dentist and hygienist will use a periodontal probe, to measure the depth of this hidden pocket. The depth of this hidden pocket, termed "pocket depth" is the main indicator for the presence of periodontal disease.

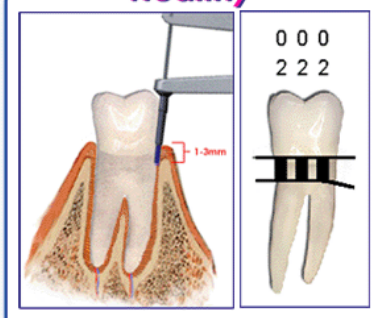
## Stages of Periodontal Disease

### Warning Signs

There are few, if any, early warning signs, but as the disease progresses, the signs and symptoms become more obvious.

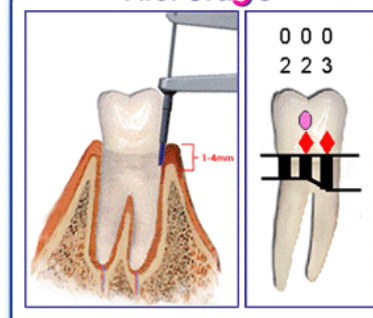
- 1.- Red swollen gums that may bleed easily
- 2.- Persistent bad breath
- 3.- Tall looking teeth (Recession)
- 4.- Loose teeth (Mobility)

### Healthy



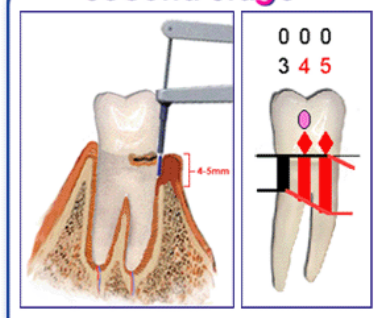
- Coral pink gums
- Gums hug teeth tightly
- No bleeding
- Pockets 1-3 mm deep

### First Stage



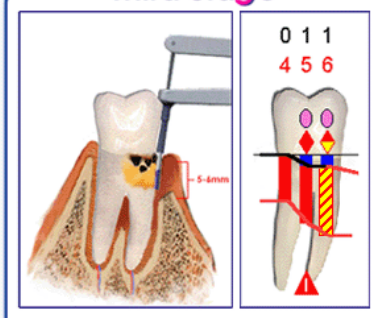
- (Gingivitis)
- Gums become red/swollen, or may bleed easily
  - This stage is not always obvious
  - Pockets 1-4 mm deep

### Second Stage



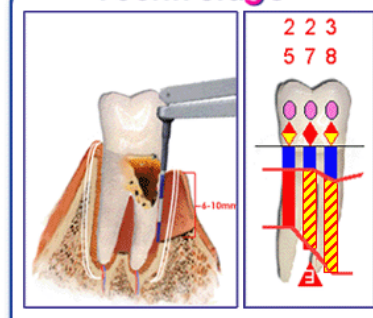
- (Early Periodontitis)
- Pockets form as gums separate from the teeth
  - Pockets 4-5 mm deep

### Third Stage



- (Moderate Periodontitis)
- Pockets deepen as more bone supporting the tooth is lost
  - Pockets become difficult to clean as they deepen
  - Pockets 5-6 mm deep

### Fourth Stage



- (Advanced Periodontitis)
- More than 50% of the bone supporting the tooth has been lost
  - Pockets 6-10 mm deep
  - Teeth loosen or may need to be extracted

## Do you have Periodontal Disease?

If left untreated, periodontal disease can lead to bleeding, discomfort, receding gums and tooth loss. More than 50% of Americans 30 years and older have some gingivitis and more than 33% (35 million) have periodontitis. Periodontal disease affects 3 out of 4 people at some point in life. Dental research has recently linked periodontal disease to an increased rate of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, respiratory disease, and preterm and low birth weight babies. The Florida Probe has been designed as a high tech instrument used in the war against periodontal disease. Speak with your dentist about routine periodontal probings, maintenance of deep pockets and ways to improve your home care. Remember that early diagnosis is the key to maintaining your oral health and preventing serious systemic problems.