

Overview

Advanced periodontal disease can wreak havoc on the health and appearance of your smile by eroding gum and bone tissue. This eventually leads to tooth loss. However, in most cases, periodontal disease is reversible under the care of a periodontist.

Depending on the severity of the disease, your periodontist will develop a treatment plan that will remove the infection, restore function (such as the ability to chew comfortably), and enhance the look of your smile. In some cases, a combination of common procedures will achieve the desired results for health, function, and esthetics.



Periodontists: Specialists in Periodontal Disease Care

A periodontist is a dentist who specializes in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of periodontal disease, and in the placement of dental implants.

With three additional years of training after dental school, periodontists have mastered the surgical skills necessary to provide predictable and successful periodontal disease management.



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Periodontal Disease Treatment

Restoring the Health of Your Smile





Non-Surgical Treatment: Scaling and Root Planing

Scaling and root planing, a deep cleaning below the gum line, is often a first step to treating periodontal disease. Your periodontist or hygienist will remove plaque and tartar (a buildup of disease-causing bacteria) from areas that brushing and flossing cannot reach, including from the roots of the teeth. In cases of mild periodontal disease (also known as gingivitis), undergoing a scaling and root planing can be enough to clear any developing infection and to prevent further disease advancement.

Surgical Treatments

In cases of severe periodontal disease (also known as periodontitis), scaling and root planing alone may not be sufficient for eliminating infection and restoring health. The following procedures are among common surgical therapies for periodontitis.

- **Pocket Depth Reduction**

Gums should fit snugly around the teeth. Advanced periodontal disease can destroy this tissue, forming pockets in the spaces between the gums and teeth. Bacteria can accumulate in these pockets and cause further damage. During a pocket depth reduction, your periodontist will clear the pockets of infection and retighten the gum tissue to eliminate or reduce pockets.

- **Bone Grafting**

If periodontal disease has destroyed the bone supporting your teeth, a regenerative procedure can reverse some of the damage. After removing the disease-causing bacteria, your periodontist may use membranes, bone grafts, or tissue-stimulating proteins to encourage your body's natural ability to regenerate healthy bone tissue.

- **Root Coverage Procedures**

Root coverage procedures are often used to treat gums that have receded to the point that the roots of a tooth are exposed. Your periodontist will take gum tissue from the roof of your mouth (known as the palate) to cover roots, develop gum tissue where needed, or to make dental implants look more natural. This treatment protects exposed roots from decay and, in some cases, it may reduce tooth sensitivity.

- **Dental Implants**

If periodontal disease has led to tooth loss or damage, your periodontist can place a dental implant. A dental implant is an artificial tooth root that is inserted into your jaw to hold a replacement tooth or bridge. They are a long-term solution that look, feel, and function just like natural teeth.

Regular Maintenance

After undergoing any kind of periodontal treatment, your periodontist will likely advise you on ways to sustain the health of your gums. These may include follow-up visits, a daily hygiene routine of brushing and cleaning between the teeth, as well as the use of antibiotics or antimicrobials.

