The Importance of Treating Gum Disease

Many people ignore things because they're not in pain — but your regular dental checkups shouldn't be one of those things. You must visit our dentist twice per year for a routine dental exam, even if you don't feel pain in your teeth or gums, as the beginning stages of gum disease can cause damage while undetected. We can catch gum disease while it is still reversible, preventing further damage and pain.

Since gum disease is treatable in its beginning stages, early discovery is essential for a good outcome. Once gum disease advances and causes pain, bleeding, and even tooth loss, it is no longer curable and must be managed for the rest of your life. In other words: if you wait until it hurts, it may be too late! Our dentist outlines what gum disease is and the importance of treating it early.

Symptoms of Gum Disease

While almost half the adults in the U.S. have some form of gum disease, not all experience symptoms. There may not be any pain or signs in the beginning stage (also referred to as gingivitis or inflammation of the gums). If there are symptoms at this stage, you may experience:

- **Bad breath**
- **Sore, red, or bleeding gums**
- **Sensitivity to cold or hot foods**

At this stage, a professional deep cleaning, special oral rinses, and diligent brushing and flossing can effectively reverse your condition.

Untreated Gum Disease

If gum disease is left untreated, it won't go away on its own — it will advance to periodontal disease. With periodontal disease, bacteria venture further below your gum line, attacking the bone and supporting structures. This deep infection leads to:

- **Receding gum line, which makes your teeth look longer**
- **An unattractive smile**
- **Loose teeth**
- **Severe bleeding when brushing or flossing**
- **Eventual tooth loss and weakening of the supporting structures**

Ongoing treatments for advanced gum disease range from deep cleanings to scaling and root planing (where tools are used to remove plaque and bacteria from deep in the gums). In some cases, patients require a bone graft to strengthen the jaw structure or implants to replace teeth that have been lost to periodontal disease.

Beyond Just Your Dental Health...

Maintaining good dental health benefits more than just your teeth and gums. The harmful bacteria that cause gum disease, periodontitis, and tooth loss don't stay within the confines of your mouth — they also have access to your bloodstream. The bacteria's ability to travel to other organs negatively impacts your entire body and can lead to chronic health problems.

Gum disease dramatically increases the risk of the following conditions:

- **Heart disease**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Stroke**
- **Alzheimer's disease**
- **Pancreatic and kidney cancers**
- **Preterm birth and low birth weight**
- **Premature death in people with diabetes**

Thankfully, treating gum disease in its early, reversible stages can help protect your whole body's health. Make sure you schedule appointments with our dentist at least twice per year. The effects of gum disease are preventable, and treating it increases your life expectancy and preserves your beautiful smile!

Call **708-578-7600** to schedule your gum disease exam and get on track to optimal oral health.