

Mouth Matters

Dorion on Dentistry

New Laser Technology For Treatment Of Gum Disease



The 2001 Guinness Book of World Records lists periodontal disease (gum disease) as the single most common disease affecting mankind. It affects more than half the adult population and is the leading cause of tooth loss for people over the age of thirty. While susceptibility to periodontal disease is influenced by many factors including genetics, it is essentially a bacterial infection caused by specific strains of destructive organisms.

The bacteria that infect the space between the gums and teeth release enzymes that can cause the underlying bone to dissolve resulting in eventual tooth loosening. Because this process is gradual and often painless, many people are not even aware they have gum disease until it is detected by a dentist or hygienist.

Warning signs and symptoms can include bleeding, puffy, tender or itchy gums, bad breath, loose or shifting teeth, sudden changes in the bite or a receding gum line. Bacteria associated with periodontal disease can travel into the bloodstream and may result in other adverse health effects. Many recent studies have shown a link between untreated periodontal disease and diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke and low birth weight babies.

Conventional treatment for periodontal disease involves the frequent mechanical removal of bacteria laden tartar that attaches to teeth both above and below the gum line. The procedure is called scaling and root planning and is usually done by the dental hygienist. In very advanced cases surgery is sometimes recommended to remove pathogens that are buried deep below the gum line. Both topical and systemic antimicrobial medications are also commonly used with varying degrees of success.

At the current time we have no absolute cure for periodontal disease. Gum disease is like diabetes in that our goal is to manage and control the destructive

processes through lifestyle modifications and an ongoing commitment to treatment. Untreated, the disease will progress at a much more rapid rate, which in turn dramatically increases the chance of acute abscesses and early tooth loss.

A new treatment called Periowave™ is now available in the fight against the bacteria associated with periodontal disease. Periowave™ uses a technology known as Photodynamic Disinfection. The treatment involves irrigating the space between the tooth and gum with a special dye that stains pathogenic bacteria. Then a non-thermal diode laser with a wavelength matched to the colour of the dye is applied to the tissue. The targeted bacteria are essentially vapourized by the laser rendering the area disinfected.

This treatment is painless, safe and takes only a few minutes to accomplish. There is also less risk of systemic side effects or bacterial resistance

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as can occur with conventional antibiotics. It is not a substitute for regular scaling and root planning but rather is used as a supplement to it. Many researchers believe, however, that this treatment will significantly reduce the need for gum surgery and several studies have shown that once the bacteria are eradicated the health of the gum issues is significantly enhanced.

We are currently offering Periowave™ therapy for those patients who might benefit from this exciting new technology.

Yours for better dental health

Rae Dorion, DDS

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