

# The Truth About Healthy Teeth And Gums

(NAPSA)—You don't have to be down in the mouth about dental health if you consider a few facts.

First, you should know that the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) estimates that three out of four Americans suffer from some form of gum disease. What's more, research links gum disease to such serious conditions as diabetes, heart disease and certain forms of cancer. Nevertheless, only some 3 percent seek treatment.

According to Samuel Low, DDS, MS, associate dean and professor of periodontology at the University of Florida College of Dentistry and president of the AAP, "Patients are not aware of the long-term and potentially dangerous implications of untreated gum disease. There are a variety of myths surrounding periodontal disease."

To help you tell fact from fallacy, the AAP has identified and addressed some common misconceptions:

**1. Bleeding gums are no big deal.** Red, swollen and bleeding gums are a sign of periodontal disease. If you notice bleeding while brushing or flossing or when eating certain foods, schedule a visit with your dental professional.

**2. You don't need to floss every day.** Routine oral care, which includes brushing after every meal and before bedtime and flossing at least once a day, is the best way to prevent gum disease. It's also a good idea to see a dental professional for a thorough checkup twice a year. If gum disease is diagnosed, a consultation with a periodontist, a dentist who specializes in treating periodontal disease, may help.

**3. A visit to the periodontist will be scary.** Periodontists are gum disease experts. They've had three or more years of specialized training after dental school centered on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of periodontal disease. Periodontists are equipped

## Gum Disease By The Numbers

- Three out of four Americans have some form of gum disease.
- 80 percent believe gum disease can lead to other health problems.
- The correct length of floss to use is at least 18 inches.
- 97 percent of periodontists report that female patients practice better oral hygiene than male patients.
- Three out of 10 people may be genetically susceptible to gum disease.



with the latest treatments and technologies, using innovative tools such as digital radiography, ultrasound technology, biomarker measurement and laser therapy to help make your visit more comfortable.

**4. A tooth lost to gum disease is a tooth lost forever.** Gum disease is a major cause of tooth loss in adults. However, in addition to treating gum disease, periodontists are also experts in placing dental implants—a convenient and comfortable way to permanently replace missing teeth. A dental implant is an artificial tooth root placed into the jaw to hold a replacement tooth. Studies have shown that dental implants have a 98 percent success rate and, with proper care, let you speak, eat and smile with confidence. In fact, a survey conducted by the AAP found that over 70 percent of respondents reported being "pleased" or "extremely satisfied" with their dental implants.

**5. Poor oral hygiene is the only way to develop gum disease.** Forgoing good oral hygiene can certainly contribute to gum disease but other risk factors include tobacco use, stress, poor diet and genetics.

To determine your risk, take a free online test at [www.perio.org/consumer/4a.html](http://www.perio.org/consumer/4a.html). For more information, visit [perio.org](http://perio.org).