



COMMONLY USED PERIODONTAL TERMS

The following are a few of the most commonly used terms when referring to periodontal disease.

ABSCESS

Localized collection of pus in a cavity formed by the disintegration of tissues.

AGGRESSIVE PERIODONTITIS

A form of periodontitis that occurs in patients who are otherwise clinically healthy. Common features include rapid attachment loss and bone destruction and familial aggregation.

CALCULUS

Hardened dental plaque. Calculus (or tartar) is usually hard, rough and porous.

CEMENTUM

A mineralized bone-like tissue that covers the tooth root and blends with the periodontal ligament to hold the tooth in place.

CHRONIC PERIODONTITIS

A form of periodontal disease resulting in inflammation within the supporting tissues of the teeth, progressive attachment and bone loss and is characterized by pocket formation and/or recession of the gingiva. It is recognized as the most frequently occurring form of periodontitis. It is prevalent in adults, but can occur at any age. Progression of attachment loss usually occurs slowly, but periods of rapid progression can occur.

DENTAL PLAQUE

A sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on the teeth. The bacteria in dental plaque is what causes periodontal disease. If plaque is not removed carefully each day by brushing and flossing, it becomes calculus.

FLAP SURGERY

The periodontist makes an incision in the gum where periodontal pockets have formed. He or she reflects the gum flap away, exposing the tooth root and cleans all infection out from the pocket. Bone regeneration procedures such as bone-grafting may be performed at this point. The periodontist then positions the gum to reduce the pocket and promote healing. The incision is sutured closed following the procedure.

GINGIVITIS

The first stage of periodontal disease. The gums usually become red, swollen and bleed easily. This is brought on by the bacteria in dental plaque if not removed on a daily basis.

IMPLANTS

Artificial substitutes for tooth roots. Made from titanium and placed in the jaw, dental implants are either screw, cylinder or blade in form. Prosthetic teeth are attached to the part of the implant that protrudes through the gum. In many ways, dental implants function like natural teeth.

MAINTENANCE THERAPY

An ongoing program designed to prevent periodontal disease from recurring for patients who have undergone periodontal treatment. Also referred to as supportive periodontal therapy.

NECROTIZING PERIODONTAL DISEASES

An infection characterized by necrosis of gingival tissues, periodontal ligament and alveolar bone. These lesions are most commonly observed in individuals with systemic conditions including, but not limited to, HIV infection, malnutrition and immunosuppression.

OSSEOINTEGRATION

The attachment of the bone to a dental implant. This usually takes three to six months after the implant has been placed in the mouth.

PERIODONTAL LIGAMENT

The tissue that attaches the tooth to the bone. Usually destroyed by advanced cases of periodontal disease, creating increased mobility of the teeth.

PERIODONTAL POCKET

Toxins in plaque destroy the gum and connective tissues beneath the gumline. The gums pull away from the teeth, forming a pocket (space). As the disease progresses toward the bone, the pocket fills with plaque and infection. If not treated, the bone and connective tissue surrounding the tooth may become so severely damaged that the tooth will fall out or need to be extracted.

PERIODONTICS

The branch of dentistry that specializes in treating the supporting tissues of the teeth and in the placement, maintenance and treatment of dental implants.

PERIODONTIST

A dentist who has additional training in periodontics and specializes in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of tissues surrounding the teeth and in the placement and maintenance of dental implants.

PERIODONTITIS

Periodontal disease involving bone loss around the teeth.

PERIODONTITIS AS A MANIFESTATION OF SYSTEMIC DISEASES

Periodontitis, often with onset at a young age, associated with one of several systemic diseases, such as diabetes.

PERIODONTIUM

The tissues that surround and support the teeth, including the gums, periodontal ligament and bone.

ROOT SCALING AND PLANING

A non-surgical procedure where the periodontist removes plaque and calculus from the periodontal pocket and around the tooth root and smooths the root surfaces to promote healing.

