

Protecting Your Oral Health

Congratulations! You've already taken the first step towards good oral health by pursuing active periodontal therapy. You're already beginning to enjoy some of the benefits of treatment- a healthy mouth and a happy smile. Now that you've made the commitment to good oral health, it's important for you to protect it. Without careful, ongoing monitoring and treatment, periodontal disease can recur. Left untreated, periodontal disease can lead to bone and tooth loss. With help from periodontists, dentists who specialize in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of periodontal disease, you have an excellent chance of keeping your teeth for a lifetime!

How do I protect my oral health?

Once you've been diagnosed with and treated for periodontal disease, regular periodontal maintenance enables you to gain control of the disease and increases your chances of keeping your natural teeth. Periodontal maintenance is a specialized treatment to protect your gums and the bone that supports your teeth. This treatment is different from traditional six-month dental cleanings from your general dentist, which also help to protect the health of your teeth.

During a periodontal maintenance visit, your periodontist updates your dental and medical histories to note any factors that may influence your periodontal health. In addition to a dental examination, a thorough periodontal evaluation is performed, which may include an assessment of

your probing depths, oral cancer screening, and x-rays to evaluate the bone supporting your teeth. Plaque and calculus are then removed from above and below the gum line, and your periodontist will review your at-home oral hygiene routine. If new or recurrent periodontal disease is identified, additional treatment may be recommended.

How will I benefit from periodontal maintenance?

Periodontal disease is similar to other chronic diseases, such as diabetes; the key to control is early diagnosis and prompt treatment. Periodontal maintenance is a way for you to protect your oral health by helping to prevent or minimize the recurrence and progression of periodontal disease. If the disease returns, careful monitoring increases the likelihood of locating and treating it in a timely manner- before tooth-threatening bone loss becomes uncontrollable.

Protecting your periodontal health brings a lifetime of benefits. You keep dental costs down by preventing future visits. You smile, speak, and eat with comfort and confidence. More importantly, research has linked periodontal disease to other health problems such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. As research continues to define how periodontal disease is linked to these and other health problems, oral maintenance is essential. As you can see, gum disease is more than just gums; a commitment to oral maintenance is a commitment to better health!



How often do I need periodontal maintenance?

The answer to this question varies from person to person. Your periodontist will work with you to create a schedule that best protects your oral health. The intervals between periodontal maintenance visits may range from every few weeks to a few times a year, and the frequency may be influenced by:

- Risk factors such as genetics or tobacco use
- Severity of periodontal disease
- Severity of bone loss
- Overall general health
- At-home oral hygiene

At each periodontal maintenance visit, your periodontist will monitor your disease progression and treatment effectiveness, and may increase or decrease the frequency of your visits accordingly.

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Visit perio.org to assess your risk and for more information on periodontal disease.