



Do You Have Gum Disease?

What would you do if you had an ulcer the size of your palm, which bleeds, may express pus, smells, and does not heal on its own? You would most likely see a physician and make sure that it is treated. Dr. Jonathan Ross at Bluffton Periodontics sees these ulcerations around patients' teeth every day. The patients never knew they had a problem because there was no pain.

Information is continually being released confirming that chronic inflammation from gum disease can be detrimental to your health. You can find articles in your newspaper on a regular basis about oral health affecting systemic health. It is well established that periodontal disease worsens diabetes control and that diabetics are more likely to have worse periodontal disease. Periodontitis is also associated with preterm/low-weight births, cardiovascular disease, pneumonia, rheumatoid arthritis, to mention a few conditions.

The prevalence of gum disease had previously been estimated at about 35 percent of Americans over 30 years old and over 50 percent of Americans over 50 years old. Recent CDC data suggests that the prevalence has been understated by 50 percent. The worrisome fact is that most people do not realize they have the disease. The Surgeon General stated in 2000 that periodontal disease is the second most prevalent disease next to cardiovascular disease in the U.S. and is also the most under-diagnosed disease.

If gum disease is a silent disease, what can you do to find out whether you have it? If your hygienist tells you that you have gingivitis or periodontitis, do not ignore it. Even

if you have never been told you have gum disease, you can assess your risk with a simple questionnaire (receive a free copy by calling Bluffton Periodontics at 815-3030 or visit blufftonperiodontics.com). Do you floss infrequently? Are you diabetic? Are you older than 50 years old? Have you previously had "deep cleanings"? If you answer "yes" to these or other questions, you are at greater risk for acquiring periodontitis.

If you believe you have gum disease, you should ask for a comprehensive periodontal exam. A comprehensive exam can take over 45 minutes at the initial visit. After looking at over several hundred data points and current x-rays, the clinician will develop a diagnosis, prognosis, and a customized treatment plan.

Where mild disease can be treated with a deep cleaning (scaling and root planing), more severe disease (drifting teeth, mobility, and loss of bone between multi-rooted teeth) will need more than a cleaning. A board certified periodontist like Ross will be able to discuss what treatment is appropriate.

A periodontist is a dental specialist with two to three years extra training in the diagnosis and treatment of gum diseases. A periodontist primarily saves teeth from bone loss, reduces inflammation, and maintains a healthier environment long-term. If a tooth cannot be saved, Ross has extensive training in the use of dental implants to replace the tooth.

Gum surgery has a reputation as being painful and leaving teeth looking longer. If you have been told that you need gum surgery, you now have an alternative. Ross is the only board certified periodontist practicing in Beaufort County. He is always looking to improve patients' treatment results while limiting adverse outcomes. This is why he utilizes the Periolas laser for the treatment of gum disease (LANAP). The Nd:YAG laser light is preferentially absorbed by diseased tissues, bacteria, and tartar. It is a minimally invasive procedure which can regrow the structures that anchor the teeth, while minimizing recovery time and discomfort for the patient. If you have any questions, call Bluffton Periodontics at (843) 815-3030. [📞](https://www.facebook.com/blufftonperiodontics)

Do you floss infrequently? Are you diabetic? Are you older than 50 years old? Have you previously had "deep cleanings"? If you answer "yes" to these or other questions, you are at greater risk for acquiring periodontitis.