

## YOUR GUMS AND YOUR SMILE

A smile is one of the most universally recognizable expressions. Smiling can demonstrate a person's happiness, confidence, attractiveness, sociability, and sincerity. However, the effects of gum disease or other oral tissue disorders cannot only be dangerous to your health and well-being, but can also have the potential to ruin your smile.

Luckily, periodontists are the experts in treating the tissues around the teeth. They have the know-how to treat the effects of gum disease or other oral tissue disorders and help improve your smile. There are a variety of periodontal cosmetic procedures that can improve and enhance the overall artwork of your smile.

### Missing Teeth

Gum disease is one of the leading causes of tooth loss in adults. In the past, the only options for disguising tooth loss were dentures and bridges. Nowadays, dental implants are a more natural looking option because implants look and feel just like real teeth. They also allow the patient to speak and eat with comfort and confidence. During this procedure, a dental implant is attached to the root and after a healing period, an artificial tooth is attached. The result is a permanent replacement tooth that blends right in with the rest.

### Root Coverage

Gum recession as a result of gum disease causes the tooth root to

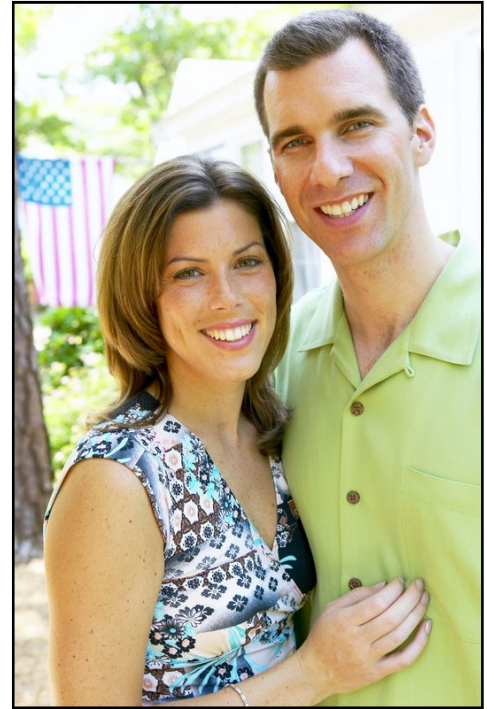
become exposed, which can make teeth look long and can prematurely age a person. In fact, the phrase "long in the tooth", used to describe the elderly, is derived from this very reason. A periodontist can fix this problem with a procedure called root coverage. During this procedure, tissue from the mouth's palate, or other synthetic materials, are used to facilitate coverage of the exposed root.

### Gummy Smile

Periodontists also have the ability to fix a "gummy smile" when a person's teeth appear too short. The teeth may actually be the proper length, but they're covered with too much gum tissue. Your periodontist can correct this by performing a procedure called crown lengthening. During this procedure, excess gum and bone tissue is reshaped to expose more of the natural tooth. Think of it like pushing back the cuticles on a fingernail. The outcome is longer looking teeth and a winning smile.

Your gums are an important part of your smile. They frame the teeth and play an integral role in the overall aesthetics of your everyday appearance. While taking care of them by brushing and flossing daily is the best way to maintain a healthy mouth, talk to your periodontist about the procedures available to maximize the potential of your smile.

1 R Patel, P Richards, M Inglehart. Periodontal Health, Quality of Life, and Smiling Patterns – An Exploration. *Journal of Periodontology*. 2008, Vol. 79, No. 2, Pages 224-231



### Smile for Happy Gums

A recent study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* found evidence that periodontal, or gum, disease may negatively affect an individual's smiling patterns and deter someone from displaying positive emotions through a smile.<sup>1</sup> So maintain good oral health by brushing and flossing daily and give your gums something to smile about.

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. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM for a free brochure on periodontal disease.