

# Periodontal (gum) treatment

**This leaflet explains more about having periodontal gum treatment including the benefits, risks and alternatives. It also provides information on what you can expect when you come to hospital.**

**If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a dentist or dental nurse caring for you.**

## **What is periodontal treatment?**

Periodontal treatment is the specialist cleaning of your teeth and gums to help control the bacteria that cause gum disease.

Gum disease is caused by the germs (bacteria) which live in your mouth. The bacteria stick to your teeth, irritate the gums and make them bleed. Gum disease can eventually destroy the gum and bone which support your teeth.

Some people get more severe gum disease than others. This may have specific causes such as diabetes or smoking, but some people are just more prone to gum disease.

## **What happens during the initial periodontal treatment?**

We will remove the 'tartar' (calculus) caused by bacteria from above the gum line by cleaning (scaling) the teeth.

If the disease has already destroyed some of the support for your teeth we will also remove bacteria and calculus from under the gum by cleaning (scaling and instrumenting) your teeth. This involves the careful use of fine powered and hand operated cleaning instruments on the tooth surfaces.

Periodontal treatment is given over several appointments and the number of appointments you will need depends on how severe and widespread your disease is. Patients with more aggressive forms of gum disease may be asked to take short courses of antibiotics after treatment.

We will also teach you the best methods of cleaning your teeth and gums to remove the bacteria. Treatment will be most effective if you clean your teeth thoroughly on a daily basis.

## **What are the benefits – why should I have periodontal treatment?**

After periodontal treatment your gums will become healthier, which will help you keep your teeth longer. The improvements will depend on how good your cleaning becomes and how severe your disease was to start with. If your gums bleed, are red or are swollen this will get better. If your gums are sore, treatment should help and if your teeth feel loose they may feel firmer after treatment. Your breath may become fresher.

## What are the risks?

- The gums occasionally feel sore after scaling but should feel better after a few days.
- Your teeth may become sensitive to hot, cold or sweet substances but usually this will decrease within a few weeks.
- Sometimes you may need to use special toothpaste or have other treatment.

## Are there any alternatives?

**No treatment:** The result of not having treatment will depend on how severe your disease is. With no treatment the gum disease could get worse. Your teeth could become painful or you may lose your teeth sooner.

**Extractions:** Removal (extraction) of teeth may be an acceptable alternative treatment if your gum disease is severe. This may mean you need replacement teeth such as a denture or bridge. Such treatment would routinely be provided by your own dentist. Some people find it easier and more enjoyable to eat with natural teeth than a denture.

Extractions would reduce the time spent treating your gums and an extraction would remove a painful tooth quickly. An extraction may also be a suitable option if teeth are loose. If your front teeth have a poor appearance a denture may look better.

## How can I prepare for periodontal treatment?

Continue to take any medications as normal. Please make sure that you tell us about any problems with your health and about any tablets or medicines you are taking. Some medical conditions change the advice and information we need to give you. If you smoke tobacco we recommend that you stop smoking as gum treatment does not work as well in smokers as non-smokers. If you would like support to stop smoking you can contact Guy's and St Thomas' stop smoking service on 020 7188 0995 or email [stopsmoking@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:stopsmoking@gstt.nhs.uk).

## Will I feel any pain?

You may experience a little discomfort while we are cleaning your teeth so we may give you local anaesthetic injection to make the gum numb.

## What happens after the procedure?

As the gums become healthier they may shrink or recede and the teeth may appear longer. You may also notice spaces appearing between the teeth.

## What do I need to do after I go home?

There are no special precautions that need to be taken when you return home. You will need to continue with tooth cleaning at home and stick to the special advice given to you by your dentist.

## Will I have a follow up appointment?

Your response to treatment will be monitored at a future appointment and further treatment may be needed. This appointment will either be organised before you leave hospital or sent to you by post.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about periodontal treatment, please contact the periodontology department on 0207 188 4941 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). If it is out of hours and an emergency, go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

### NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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