

# Periodontitis: Don't Wait Until It's Too Late

## What is periodontitis?

Periodontitis is a severe form of gum disease that damages the soft tissue and destroys the bone that supports your teeth, eventually leading to tooth loss. It affects not only a person's oral health, but also their overall health as it may increase the risk for certain medical conditions such as [diabetes](#), rheumatoid arthritis, and [heart disease](#). Periodontitis can be mild, moderate or severe.



**10%**  
of Canadians are  
living with severe  
periodontitis.

## What are the causes of periodontitis?

Periodontitis typically begins with gingivitis, a mild gum infection caused by the build-up of harmful plaque biofilm and calculus on the teeth and under the gums. Left untreated, this infection eventually causes the gums to pull away from the teeth and form periodontal pockets that trap and grow more bacteria, eroding the supporting bone.

## What other factors contribute to periodontitis?

Although bacteria beneath the gumline are the primary cause of periodontitis, other factors can increase its severity.



Tobacco and marijuana use, and vaping



Chronic diseases and stress



Medications that reduce saliva flow or cause gum overgrowth



Hormonal changes



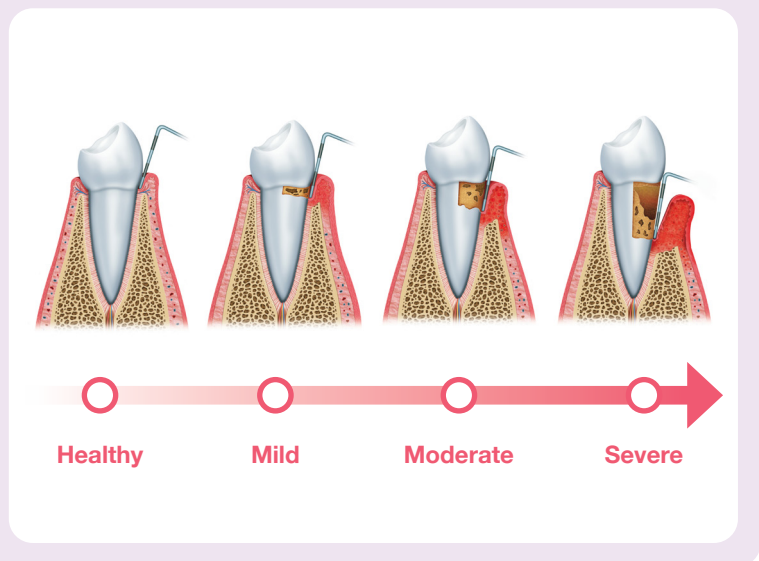
Poor nutrition



Genetics

## What are the signs of periodontitis?

- 1 Red, swollen gums that bleed easily
- 2 Receding gums
- 3 Gums that have pulled away from the teeth, creating deep pockets around them
- 4 Pus between the teeth and gums
- 5 Persistent bad breath or a bad taste in the mouth
- 6 Painful chewing
- 7 Teeth that feel loose, shift or fall out



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## What can I do to prevent periodontitis?

Good oral hygiene practices are key to preventing or managing periodontitis.

- Maintain regular dental hygiene appointments.
- **Brush** two times a day, for two minutes each time, with an electric or soft-bristled toothbrush. Make sure to brush along the gumline.
- Clean between your teeth with **floss**, an interdental brush or a water flosser daily.
- Use an antibacterial mouthrinse for 30 to 60 seconds daily.
- Eat a healthy diet consisting of proteins, fruits, and vegetables.
- Quit smoking, vaping, and using tobacco and marijuana.
- Manage health conditions such as diabetes and obesity.



## What treatment options are available if I have periodontitis?

Unlike gingivitis, which is curable if caught early, periodontitis requires ongoing care from a dental hygienist or a dentist who specializes in periodontal disease (a periodontist).

Your dental hygienist will create a personalized treatment plan for you that may include:

- Appointments every 3 to 4 months to remove plaque biofilm and calculus on your teeth and below the gumline
- Education on additional home care techniques you can use to maintain good oral hygiene
- Application of medications in the pockets around your teeth
- Guidance for quitting smoking and vaping
- Referral to a periodontist in cases of severe periodontitis

Although periodontitis cannot be cured, it can be managed.

At your next appointment, ask your dental hygienist if you have or are at risk for periodontitis. Working together, you can protect your gums and teeth and keep your smile healthy for a lifetime.

Learn more about oral health at [dentalhygienecanada.ca](https://dentalhygienecanada.ca).