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Gum Disease Part 2: Treatments

Luckily, there are a few ways that gum disease can be treated without needing to turn to surgery. First to find out which treatment option would work best for you, a dentist will perform a dental exam. One of my goals is to avoid surgical gum treatments and take a non surgical approach. However sometimes surgery is necessary. There are different types:

Flap surgery/pocket reduction surgery. During this procedure the gums are lifted back and the bony pockets are reduced by adjusting the bone next to them.

Bone grafts. Combined with the above, his procedure involves using fragments of your own bone, synthetic bone, or donated bone to replace bone destroyed by gum disease.

Guided tissue regeneration. Done in combination with flap surgery, a small piece of mesh-like fabric is inserted between the bone and gum tissue. The goal here is to allow the bone and connective tissue to regrow to better support the teeth.

Soft tissue grafts. This procedure reinforces thin gums or fills in places where gums have receded below your teeth.

Treatments for gum disease that don't involve surgery include:

Professional dental cleaning. During a typical checkup your hygienist will remove the plaque and tartar (plaque that builds up and hardens on the tooth surface and can only be removed with professional cleaning) from above and below the gum line of all teeth. If you have some signs of gum disease, your dentist may recommend professional dental cleaning more than twice-a-year.

Scaling and root planing. This is a deep-cleaning, nonsurgical procedure, done under a local anesthetic, whereby plaque and tartar from above and below the gum line are scraped away (scaling) and rough spots on the tooth root are made smooth (planing). Smoothing the rough spots removes bacteria and provides a clean surface for the gums to reattach to the teeth. Scaling and root planing is done if your dentist or periodontist determines that you have plaque and calculus (hardened plaque, also called tartar) under the gums that needs to be removed. Often we can eliminate the need for the first three surgical techniques by performing this. Additionally during the SRP process, your dental professional may elect to administer an antibiotic treatment as well. One such treatment is Arestin, which is a powder that can be placed in the pockets between your gums and teeth, and over time releases antibiotics that help your gums heal and fight off further infection. In fact, a study published in 2001 found that patients treated with Arestin during SRP had a more favorable outcome than those only treated with SRP.