



Your Gums

Building a strong foundation

In her previous article in April, Dr. Joanne Lussier raised concerns about the increase of oral cancer cases, mainly related to the human papilloma virus and transmitted through oral sex. In this installment, she aims to warn readers about the most important disease responsible for tooth loss and general health problems: Periodontitis or gingivitis, which afflicts the foundation of your mouth, the gums.

By Dr. Joanne Lussier - Centre Dentaire Joanne Lussier Inc.

How many of you have to deal with bleeding gums when brushing or flossing? What about bad breath? What do you make of it? Most people ignore it and go years without any real concern. Hopefully, this article will give you a little wake-up call.

What would you do if one of your fingers was bleeding every day? Chances are it would eventually get infected, swell up and down, you would become greatly concerned, and finally consult a doctor. The minute your gums are bleeding, it is a sign from your body of a disturbance that needs to be addressed. Simply brushing twice a day and flossing once a day is the quick and easy fix-it-yourself solution. If the situation is mild, it should resolve itself within days of good oral hygiene.

Some symptoms of gum disease include: light to heavy bad breath, bleeding, swelling, and discomfort ranging from mild to severe pain affecting part or the entirety of the mouth, which could leave you sleepless if food gets compacted between teeth. If gum issues persist, the bone holding your teeth will respond in various ways: degrading and degenerating, leaving pockets and bone defects leading to a loss of tooth support, an increase of tooth mobility and eventual tooth loss. It's also crucial to note that gum disease could be a big trigger for different illnesses: heart disease, diabetes, premature baby loss, etc.

Being in private practice for 25 years, I've experienced that more than 70% of patients have suffered from gum disease at one point in their life and more than 50% of those will lose teeth over an unresolved problem. I would also add that too many dentists unfortunately do not take the necessary steps to inform, educate and treat their patients. Too many patients want to work on the esthetic look of their teeth without considering the deeper lying issues. Think about it: gums and bones are the foundation of your mouth. Would you build a second floor to your house knowing that your foundation is not solid enough to hold it up for years to come? It is crucial to get those gums healthy and to master your oral hygiene before anything else.

It is accepted worldwide by dental clinicians and researchers that periodontal disease involves a group of inflammatory conditions of the supporting tissues of the teeth that are caused by bacteria. It has been the objective of periodontal therapy to halt the progression of periodontal infection by suppressing or eliminating the subgingival microflora. Typical and conventional methods to achieve this goal include scaling and root planning. It will restore gingival health by completely removing elements that provoke gingival inflammation (plaque, calculus, and endotoxins). Conventionally, when a patient showed deeper pockets after this procedure, we used to refer them to a gum specialist (periodontist). They would then per-

form gum surgery resulting in the elimination of the pocket, and the gum was repositioned lower on the tooth therefore showing more of the root and often creating cold or hot sensitivity.

For the past 7 years, I have been very successfully working with adjunctive and non-surgical therapies in order to eliminate periodontal disease. Lasers have been used in periodontics for the past 2 decades in the debridement of periodontal pockets. Although considered controversial with a number of periodontists, they have shown to give extremely interesting results when patients do not wish to go through the process of surgery and its numerous disadvantages. Surgeries like gingivectomies, gingivoplasties, and frenectomies can now all be done by laser. We've seen patients with canker or cold sores leave our office pain free immediately following laser applications.

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The management of periodontal therapy using laser plus scaling and root planning shows no adverse effects. On the contrary, clinical studies, as well as my clinical experience, have shown quicker gingival healing, and 70% of patients reported less soft tissue discomfort and tooth sensitivity in sites treated with the laser. Laser radiation offers several advantages over scaling and root planning, in that it can be delivered to the very end of deep periodontal pockets or areas



Dr. Joanne Lussier

such as furcations (between roots) where scaling and root planning are less effective, and, as opposed to antibiotics, it does not prompt bacterial resistance or systemic side effects. Laser treatment resulted in a significant reduction in the total number of colony-forming units of bacteria related to periodontal disease and in their subgingival proportion. This reduction appeared to be related to the combining of the 3 procedures used in our protocol: scaling, root planning, and laser therapy.

Laser is a non-invasive and painless treatment of choice for periodontal disease. We have also reported significantly greater reductions in tooth mobility, pocket depth, and clinical attachment loss compared with those treated by scaling and root planning alone. We also notice that the gums bleed less. When re-evaluating 3 and 6 months post-treatment, a mouth being maintained with good oral hygiene will sustain the same great results cited above.

One will have to keep in mind that a good part of the success will depend on home care - patients must learn to master their oral hygiene. It is paramount for us at Clinique Dentaire Joanne Lussier to show our patients the importance of good brushing and flossing habits. We sometimes have to eliminate toothpaste from a patient's daily routine, replacing it with an adjunct that has proven its effectiveness on every mouth afflicted by periodontal disease. In most cases, bad breath will disappear within days of starting our treatment. Patients see great improvements very quickly after beginning procedures. Rarely will we have to go into surgery and our patients are very delighted with the results. ❖

Are you in need of dental work or a second opinion? Then make the switch to Dr Lussier's state-of-the-art clinic in RDP. They'll give you an honest diagnosis based on your real needs. Their office offers a full range of dental services and a qualified staff devoted to your oral and general health.

(Very easily accessible off Highway 25)



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