

What is Periodontal Disease?

? WHAT IS IT

Periodontal disease (also known as gum disease) is a bacterial disease of the supporting structures of the teeth – i.e. gums and bone. The bacterial infection results in inflammation of the gums and bone loss. It is usually a completely pain free disease, although there are often symptoms such as bleeding with brushing and flossing, loose teeth, or bad breath.

! RELATED HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

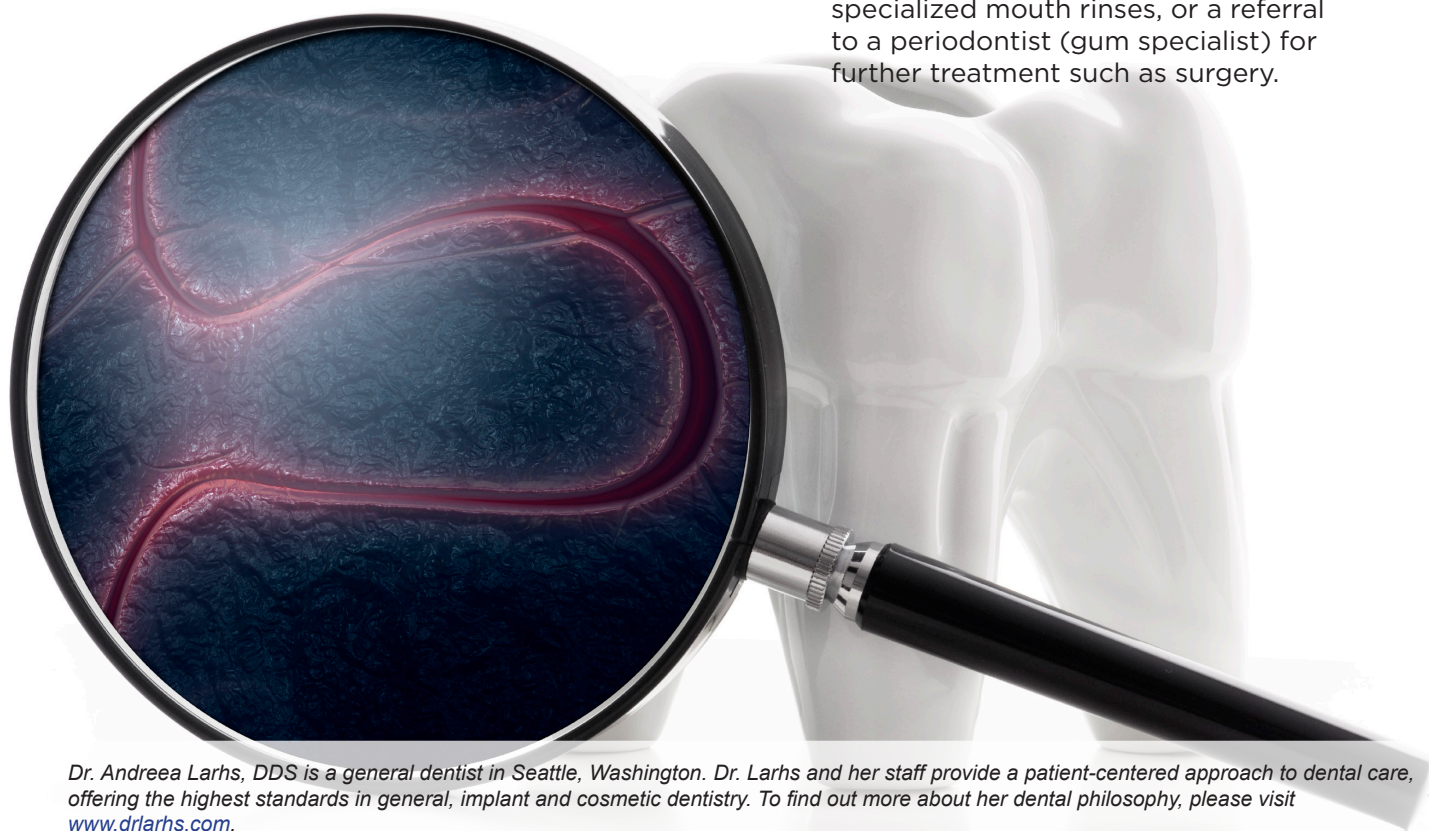
Aside from the local consequences of the disease – ultimate tooth loss, there are systemic implications that most people are not aware of. The chronic inflammation present with gum disease triggers systemic reactions, which increase risk for heart disease. In pregnant women, periodontitis is associated with premature deliveries and low birth weight babies.

? WHO GETS IT

Who gets gum disease? Well, anyone can. However, there are certain predisposing factors, such as smoking, family history, suboptimal home care (brushing and flossing), or lack of adequate professional care (dental cleanings and examinations).

! TREATMENT OPTIONS

There are various ways to treat gum disease. As with any disease, prevention is of utmost importance, especially since bone loss is not reversible even once the bacterial infection is resolved. In other words, well-treated gum disease will stop the bone loss in its tracks, but the bone already lost does not grow back. First line of treatment is an appropriate professional cleaning procedure, often done with local anesthetic, as well as excellent home care. Additional management may include local or systemic antibiotics, specialized mouth rinses, or a referral to a periodontist (gum specialist) for further treatment such as surgery.



Dr. Andreea Larhs, DDS is a general dentist in Seattle, Washington. Dr. Larhs and her staff provide a patient-centered approach to dental care, offering the highest standards in general, implant and cosmetic dentistry. To find out more about her dental philosophy, please visit www.drlarhs.com.