



# Periodontitis

Periodontitis, also known as pyorrhea, is an inflammation of the gums and tooth sockets.

## What is periodontitis?

Periodontitis also known as pyorrhea, is a disease caused by bacteria that gather in the spaces between the gums and tooth sockets which then become inflamed. If the problem is not addressed by brushing the bacteria away, it can lead to the bone around the teeth becoming infected and resorbing. If unchecked, the teeth will slowly detach from their supporting tissues and then loosen completely.

## How will I know if I have periodontitis?

In the early stages, you may notice that your gums often and easily start to bleed, for instance, when you brush your teeth. Healthy gums are light pink in colour but if they are inflamed, they go dark red (picture 1). At this stage, normally none of the bone supporting the teeth has been affected and the teeth can recover. But if you don't clean the gums, pockets will form by the teeth which makes it easier for bacteria to gather there and the disease will accelerate (picture 2).

## How do I avoid getting periodontitis?

The most important thing is to look after your oral hygiene and brush your teeth carefully twice a day and also clean in between your teeth. That will prevent bacteria from getting a foothold and your teeth will stay healthy. Smoking can make periodontitis worse and speed up the course of the disease.

## What help is available?

Periodontitis is normally treated by dental staff removing tartar and deposits from the teeth. This is done using a tartar-removal instrument or an ultrasound tool. If deep pockets have formed, several visits to a dental hygienist are normally required so bacterial coatings can be removed from the tooth pockets. This is normally done under local anaesthetic.



**Picture 1.** Gums that have periodontitis can be this dark red colour.



**Picture 2.** After some time, pockets will form where bacteria can easily gather.