



## Your Doctor and You

### Who is a Periodontist?

Have you been told that you may have periodontal disease and need to see a periodontist? If you have, you probably thought, “*What is periodontal disease and why do I need to see a periodontist to have it treated?*”

The word “periodontal” refers to the gum tissue and bone around the tooth. Periodontal diseases, also known as gum disease, is a chronic bacterial infection that affects the gums and bone supporting the teeth. Left untreated, periodontal disease is one of the primary causes of adult tooth loss. Also, research has found a relationship between periodontal disease and more serious health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease and preterm low birth weight babies.

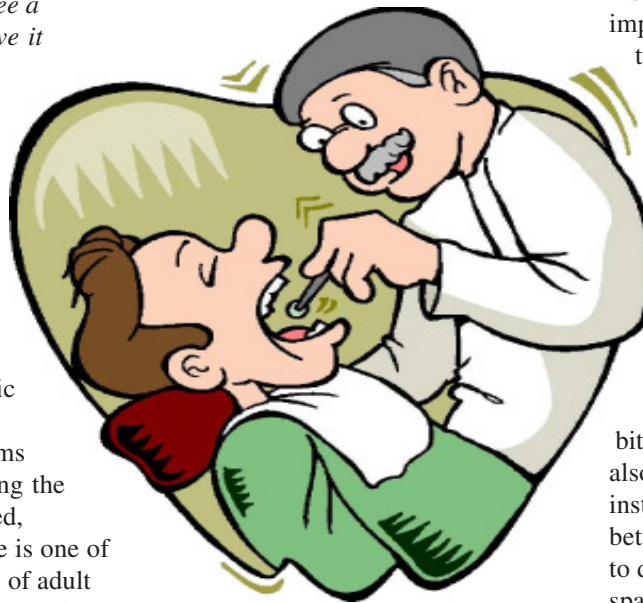
A periodontist is a dentist who specializes in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of periodontal disease and in the placement of dental implants. Periodontists receive three

cosmetic periodontal procedures to help you achieve the smile you desire.

During your first visit, your periodontist will review your complete medical and dental history with you. It is very important for your periodontist to know if you are

taking any medications or are being treated for any condition, as it may affect your periodontal care. Your gums will be examined to see if there is any gum line recession, and your teeth will be checked to see if any are loose and how the teeth fit together when you

bite. Your periodontist will also take a small measuring instrument and place it between your teeth and gums to determine the depth of spaces known as periodontal pockets. X-rays may also be taken to observe the health of the bone below your gums. If treatment is needed, a periodontist will discuss a treatment plan with you. ☺



additional years of education beyond dental school in this specialty. Periodontists are familiar with the latest techniques for diagnosing and treating periodontal disease and they can also perform

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### When Should I see a Periodontist?

Anytime is a good time to see a periodontist for a periodontal evaluation!

Sometimes the only way to detect periodontal disease is through a periodontal evaluation. If you notice any symptoms, a periodontal evaluation may be especially important for you!

Common symptoms of periodontal disease include:

- Loose or separating teeth.
- Red, swollen or tender gums.

- Gums that bleed easily, such as during brushing and flossing.
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth.
- Pus between the teeth and gums.
- A change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite.
- Persistent bad breath.

In addition to your periodontal evaluation, when you visit your periodontist, they will conduct a comprehensive risk assessment.

There are many risk factors that may increase your chances of having periodontal disease such as tobacco use, diabetes, and genetics. If you have any of these risk factors or symptoms, you may want to visit a periodontist. To find a periodontist in your area, visit [www.perio.org](http://www.perio.org) for an online referral.