

How Periodontal Disease Can Be Transmitted To Your Children & Spouse

Periodontal Disease Is An Infection

Periodontal Disease is an ongoing bacterial infection deep in the gums and bone around your teeth.

DNA Testing Indicates Periodontal Disease is Contagious

New DNA coding techniques have allowed researchers to trace the path of infection from one person to another. Periodontal disease was found to be transmitted by saliva contact between family members.

The Role of Saliva

Studies show periodontal disease bacteria travels from the pockets around your teeth into saliva. Transmission of the infection through saliva is influenced by how often a person is exposed to your saliva and their susceptibility to getting the disease. In family settings, saliva contact occurs quite often. (4)

Some common ways that saliva contact occurs between family members are:

- Kissing
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Sharing food
- Sharing a cup or glass
- Sharing utensils or drinking straws

Giving Periodontal Disease To Your Children

How did you get the periodontal disease in the first place? Most of the time, the answer is “from your parents when you were a child.” It is important not to pass along your infection to your children

In a recent study one type of periodontal infection was found 26 times more often in children younger than three years of age if the mother tested positive for this infection. (1)

In another study researchers found periodontal infection in the children of one-third of families whose parents tested positive for periodontal infection, whereas no children harbored the infection in families whose parents tested negative for the infection. (2)

Giving Periodontal Disease To Your Spouse

Husbands can give periodontal disease to their wives and wives can give it to their husbands.

One study found that spouses of patients who have periodontal infections were 20-30% more likely to have the same infection. (2)

In another study of 20 married couples, the spouses of patients with periodontal infections had worse periodontal disease than spouses of patients without infection. (3)

How Can I Help My Family?

First, you must complete all recommended periodontal treatment.

Studies have found that periodontal treatment gets rid of (or greatly reduces) the level of periodontal bacteria in your saliva.

Second, you need to keep your periodontal cleaning appointments.

Research has found that, without periodontal cleanings, some bacteria in the saliva can return to pre-treatment levels within six months. They conclude that patients can significantly reduce their risk of re-infection (of themselves and their family members) through frequent periodontal cleanings. (2)

Should I Have My Family Screened?

Researchers and dentists suggest that screening of spouses and children is important in many cases. (4). The best dentist to detect and treat the beginning stages of periodontal disease is your general dentist.

If you have concerns about family members, we suggest you schedule an appointment for them to see your general dentist.

If your dentist finds indications of periodontal infection he/she may recommend your family member:

- Do additional oral hygiene at home.
- Have more frequent dental cleanings.
- Receive periodontal treatment

Why Is Transmission Of Periodontal Disease Serious?

Periodontal infection is responsible for 75% of all adult tooth loss. Lost teeth must be replaced with dental work which can be both expensive and less natural looking.

As more teeth are lost, you will need more bridges, dental implants, partials and finally dentures. Dentures can rub painfully and give a prematurely old, “sunken-in” look.

Periodontal infection has also shown to increase the risk of Heart Disease, Heart Attack and Stroke.

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