



# Ask Dr. Grant



DR GRANT IS A RENOWNED COSMETIC DENTIST TREATING PATIENTS BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, THE ONLY COSMETIC DENTIST IN THE REGION GRANTED PRACTISING PRIVILEGES AT NUFFIELD HOSPITAL, EXETER

## Gum disease – What’s the story?

### What is it?

Gum disease is an inflammatory condition that affects the tissues that surround and support the teeth. In its minor form (gingivitis), there may be some bleeding on brushing; in its most severe form (periodontitis), teeth may become loose and even fall out. It’s certainly a disease that can be controlled, particularly in the healthy and non-smokers, and is mostly down to home care and lifestyle.

### What causes it?

Plaque is the main contributory factor. Gum disease is caused by a combination of plaque bacteria growing on the tooth’s surface and an overly aggressive immune response to these bacteria: as the body fights the bacteria, these same fighting mechanisms also attack the body itself. The skin then becomes soft and inflamed. The disease process may stop there or may continue to advance, which can affect the bone holding your teeth in.

### Who is more prone?

People with compromised medical histories or on certain medications and smokers. Treatment of smokers is particularly difficult, as the healing nutrients are no longer present in the tissues. It’s also true that if your parents suffered from gum disease, you may be

predisposed to it, but that just means you need to work harder!

### What about treatment?

A full examination is made, including an early detection check for gum disease. Treatment will always depend on the severity of the disease: slight bleeding requires a hygiene appointment and strict home care; more severe cases require antibiotics, deep cleaning under local anaesthetic and follow-up care. Home care is the most important part of the treatment.

### Any downsides?

Gums can feel tender after treatment. Severely affected teeth may need to be removed if they risk damaging the health of your good teeth.

**“ROCK BOTTOM IS GOOD SOLID GROUND AND A DEAD END STREET IS JUST A PLACE TO TURN AROUND”  
– BUDDY BUIE AND J R COBB**

### Alternatives?

Implants are not ideal when gum disease is present, as they can become infected. Dentures can also exacerbate the problem.

### Any other advice?

I always feel gum disease is the “silent destroyer” – if another part of your body was bleeding, you’d get it checked out, so why do people think it’s OK for their gums to bleed? Many patients come to me for cosmetic dentistry, but I refuse if there are signs of gum disease; you want treatment that lasts. In short, get it treated and follow a good home care routine.

### Cost?

It depends on who’s doing the treatment: hygienists £30-£80; dentists £150-£600; specialists £500-£1,000. But don’t just go for cost, as always go for trust and experience. **DL**

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