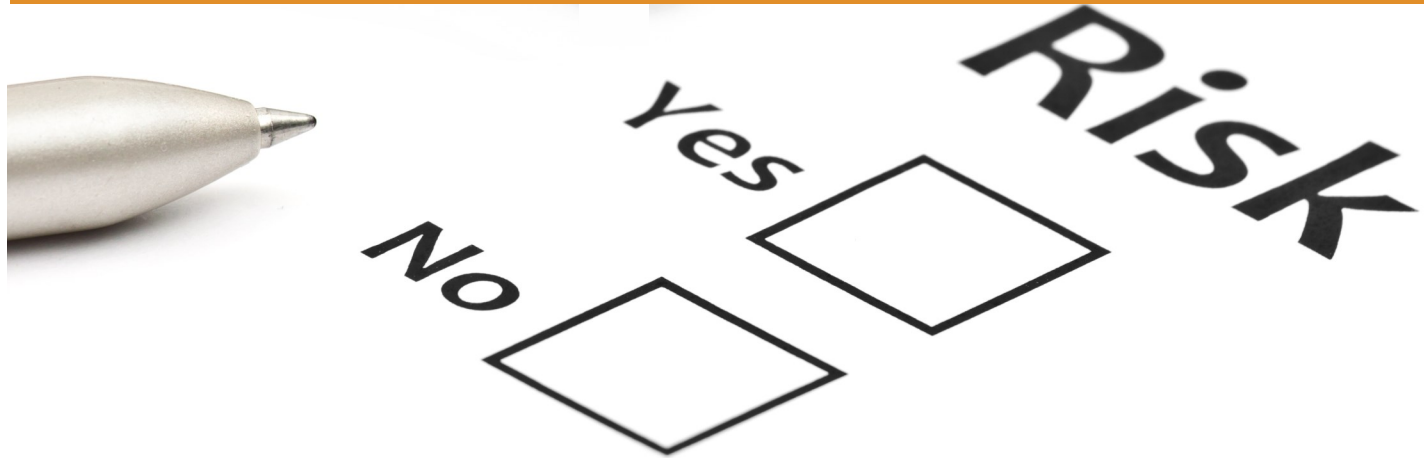


# Periodontal Disease Risk Factors



From the American Academy of Periodontology



Although periodontal disease is caused by an inflammatory response to the plaque bacteria below the gum line, certain risk factors can increase the likelihood that an individual will develop periodontal disease. Understanding your risk factors is a key component of being proactive in maintaining your periodontal health. Risk factors may also provide guidance in your periodontist's development of a treatment plan.

## Age

Studies indicate that older people have the highest rates of periodontal disease. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that more than 65 percent of adults between the ages of 65 and 79 have some form of periodontal disease.

## Smoking and Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is linked with many serious illnesses (including cancer, lung disease, and cardiovascular disease) as well as numerous other health problems. Tobacco users also are at increased risk for periodontal disease. Studies have shown that tobacco use may be one of the most significant risk factors in the development and progression of periodontal disease.

## Genetics

Research has indicated that some people may be genetically susceptible to periodontal disease, despite regular oral care habits. Testing for the likelihood for genetic pre-disposition and early intervention treatment may help reduce a person's periodontal disease risk.

## Stress

Research demonstrates that stress, which is linked to a number of health conditions, can make it more difficult for the body to fight off infection, including periodontal disease.

## Medications

Some drugs (such as oral contraceptives, anti-depressants, and certain heart medicines) can affect your periodontal health. Just as you notify your pharmacist and other health care providers of all medicines you are taking and any changes in your overall health, you should also inform your periodontist.

## Clenching or Grinding Your Teeth

Clenching or grinding your teeth can put excess force on the supporting tissues of the teeth and could speed up the rate at which these periodontal tissues are destroyed.

## Other Systemic Diseases

Other systemic diseases that interfere with the body's inflammatory system, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis, may worsen the condition of the gums and be linked to periodontal disease.

## Poor Nutrition and Obesity

A diet low in key nutrients can compromise the body's immune system and make it harder for the body to fight off infection. Because periodontal disease begins as an infection, poor nutrition can worsen the condition of your gums. Additionally, research has found that obesity may increase the risk of periodontal disease.

The American Academy of Periodontology recommends that you undergo a comprehensive periodontal evaluation annually to assess your gum health. Be sure to notify your dental professional of your periodontal disease risk factors during your visit.