Caring for your mouth when you have osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a condition where you begin to lose bone. Osteoporosis causes bone to become weak and brittle. When that happens, bones break more easily. Because of the loss of bone, osteoporosis can also make it easier for someone to get gum disease.¹ That’s why good oral health habits are important for those with osteoporosis.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is an infection of the tissue that holds your teeth in place. It is caused by germs, called bacteria, that cling to your teeth and along your gums and are part of a sticky film called plaque.

The bacteria in the plaque can infect the gums. If the plaque isn’t removed each day with brushing and flossing, it hardens into tartar. Tartar is much harder to remove and can cause even more plaque to collect.

Your dentist can tell you if you have gum disease and may refer to it as “periodontal disease.”

Osteoporosis can affect your teeth and gums

The bone loss that comes from osteoporosis can weaken the jaw bone, which can cause your teeth to become loose and even fall out. When teeth are loose and do not fit together properly, it’s easier for plaque to collect around the gums and harder to clean teeth. This makes someone with osteoporosis more likely to have infections, including gum disease.²
**Signs of gum disease**

In the early stages, people often don’t notice when they have gum disease. There are few, if any, signs. Over time people begin to have:

- Red, swollen and tender gums
- Gums that bleed when brushing
- Bad breath
- Loose teeth
- A change in the way their teeth fit together

Gum disease should be treated by a dentist, who can remove the plaque and tartar. If the gum disease is advanced, other treatments may be necessary, such as surgery. While a dentist can treat gum disease, it’s much better to prevent gum disease from starting.

**What can be done at home to keep your gums and teeth healthy?**

- Brush with a soft toothbrush after eating
- Floss every day
- If you wear dentures, keep them clean
- Have your teeth professionally cleaned at least twice a year
- If you use tobacco, talk to your doctor about quitting. Smoking can make gum disease worse
- If you do have osteoporosis, work with your doctor to get the right treatment