

Lost Teeth... Treatments Found

by Wm. J. Schlotz, D.D.S.



Pop Quiz... What's the #1 cause of tooth loss in the U.S.? If you answered tooth decay, my guess is you're in quantitatively good company. Your response would also be correct – if the question were posed in the 1980's (or earlier). According to recent surveys of American dentists, gum disease, *by a wide margin*, is the main culprit in lost teeth among adults.

Speaking of surveys, I can't help but recall the old "9 out of 10 dentists recommend sugarless gum to their patients who chew gum" commercial. Did you ever stop to think for a moment....*Exactly who would be the I?* Sorry for the digression, however, it's the little things that keep me going.

Let's return to the classroom of gum disease 101 (if they'll let us back in). Gum disease is called gingivitis when it affects only the gums; and periodontitis when it affects the bone structure. Supporting bone and gum tissue should fit snugly around teeth not unlike a turtleneck around the neck. As gum disease sets in and insidiously progresses, the turtleneck devolves to a loose mock and then to a "t" shirt. The neck in our analogy is the tooth and, as it becomes unsupported, loosens to the point of removal.

So how do we treat this bacterial disease that, to varying degrees, affects 70% of the adult population? The idea in repairing the damage is to get rid of the infection and tighten up the pockets. Until now, that often meant surgery and sutures. Two advanced *Minimally Invasive* treatments which I believe in, and employ in my office, are the Laser Periodontal Therapy (LPT)TM and the Perio Protect system.

I like the Perio Protect system for mild cases of gum disease. Custom-made soft, flexible trays gently (and repeatedly) deliver an antibiotic solution to the infected gum pockets. It's great for gingivitis.

LPTTM is the first *FDA-approved protocol* for the treatment of periodontal disease using the PerioLase laser, which is the Swiss Army Knife of soft tissue lasers. 90% of dentists employing a soft tissue laser use a DIODE laser that treats with HEAT – destroying both healthy and diseased tissue. Evidence that all lasers are not created equal, the far more sophisticated PerioLaseTM selectively targets diseased tissue and bacteria. I use it in my office to treat periodontitis.

FYI... I am not a Periodontist (specialist with a post-graduate degree in this area). I am a general dentist with advanced training in the above treatments for periodontal disease. See my next article for more details on this subject. Keep Smiling.

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