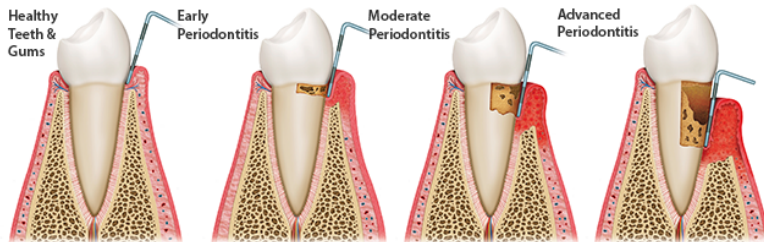




## Gum Disease (Periodontitis)

Gum disease, or the clinical term periodontitis, is present in 75% of the adult population and can exist in varying stages. The presence of gum disease is determined during a routine periodontal examination, which includes a gentle probing of the areas between teeth and the gums, which dentistry calls "gum pockets" when measuring the depths of the pockets. The deeper the measurement, the more severe and advanced is the stage of the gum infection.

Healthy teeth and gums are indicated by a pocket depth of 1 to 3 millimeters, with no bleeding or sensitivity. Healthy gums appear pinkie in color and the gum tissue closely hugs the teeth.



Early on-set of gum disease, known as "Gingivitis" is indicated by pocket depths of 3 to 4 millimeters. Gingivitis is caused when bacteria start to multiply within the plaque that sticks to the tooth's surface and creeps into the pocket, causing red and slightly inflamed, infected gum tissue. If Gingivitis is left untreated, the condition may continue to advance to a more aggressive form of the disease. The symptoms become more visible, with tender, very swollen gums that bleed easily. The pockets can now reach 5 to 7 millimeters in depth.

In this more advanced stage

"generalized chronic gum disease", the bacteria multiply and invade the swollen gum tissues and begin to destroy the bone that hold the teeth in place. Recommended treatment may include: scaling and root planning, a type of "Deep Cleaning" that goes below the gum line. A locally delivered antibiotic, such as Arestin, will be gently placed into the gum pocket that will continue to fight the infection and allow the gum tissue to heal.

Lastly, if no treatment is taken, the pockets will progress to 8-9 millimeters or more and further deterioration of the teeth and surround bone occurs. The teeth will become loose and roots will become exposed, the teeth will tend

to spread creating open spaces, as additional bone is lost. Just as serious and more important

to overall health, the bacteria and their toxins will now invade the damaged blood vessels in the gum tissues and travel to vital organs in the body, such as the heart, liver, and can result in coronary attack or stroke and create other health care issues. Dentistry now understands that diabetic patients will improve their sugar control metabolism if they have healthy gums free from the bacteria and their toxins.

In all cases, gum disease is a treatable condition only if detected early on, and can be reversed with good patient home care and regulars periodic recall visits to the dentist. The more advanced forms

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## Dental Care For Special Needs Members

Special needs members need regular dental care. A healthy mouth helps a person eat well, and avoid pain and tooth loss. Brushing and flossing every day and seeing the dentist regularly can make a big difference in the quality of life for a special needs member, and regular visits to the dentist are important. A 'get acquainted' visit with no treatment provided might help. The member can meet the dental office staff, sit in the dental chair if he or she wishes, and receive instructions on how to brush and floss. This type of visit can go a long way toward making future dental appointments go easier.

Parents and/or caretakers can also make dental appointments easier by being prepared. You may be asked to provide the special needs member's dental history and you should bring their complete medical history. This will assist the dentist in providing the best possible care in the safest environment.

of gum disease cannot be fully reversed and treatment becomes very costly and time consuming. Your dentist will recommend the most effective course of treatment for your particular stage of gum infection.

## Language Assistance Available

Many Western Dental enrollees speak a language other than English, or may prefer to speak another language when discussing their dental health or dental plan benefit matters. Currently Western Dental offers language assistance to our members. To arrange for this service, you or your dentist may call the Member Services department directly

at **1-800-992-3366** to arrange for an interpreter to join the call. Please allow some time for connection to this service.



Face-to-face interpreters in languages other than English (including Sign Language) may be available in some circumstances. Vital Documents such as plan brochures, provider directories, important forms and letters about Western Dental services, language rights and certain outreach materials are currently produced in Spanish. For more information about Language Assistance, contact **1-800-992-3366**.

## Disclosure of Review Processes

Upon request, WDS' Customer Service Department will send you a copy of the guidelines and criteria that are used to determine if a service is covered or not when a dentist or WDS provider sends requests to WDS for benefits and/or claims for payment to an enrollee, a dentist or a member of the general public. You may ask for this information by writing to Western Dental Services, Inc., P.O. Box 14227, Orange, CA 92863, or by calling WDS Customer Service at **(800) 992-3366**.

## Inquiries and Complaints

Enrollees (members) are encouraged to contact Western Dental at **1-800-992-3366** regarding any concerns that they may have while obtaining services. Western Dental maintains a grievance process to address these concerns. Enrollee complaints or grievances can be made over the phone in person, at any Western Dental Provider Office, by obtaining a Western Dental Member Incident Form and submitting it to Western Dental, or by submitting the complaint using the Western Dental website at **www.westerndental.com**. Western Dental will send notification that the complaint has been received within five calendar days of receiving the complaint, and Western Dental will send a written response to the concerns within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.

The California Department of Managed Health Care is responsible for regulating health care service plans. If you have a grievance against your Health Plan, you should first telephone your Health Plan at **1-800-992-3366** and use your Health Plan's grievance process be-

fore contacting the Department. Utilizing this grievance procedure does not prohibit any potential legal rights or remedies that may be available to you. If you need help with a grievance involving an emergency, a grievance that has not been satisfactorily resolved by your Health Plan, or a grievance that has remained unresolved for more than 30 days, you may call the Department for assistance. You may also be eligible for an Independent Medical Review (IMR). If you are eligible for IMR, the IMR process will provide an impartial review of medical decisions made by a Health Plan related to the medical necessity of a proposed service or treatment, coverage decisions for treatments that are experimental or investigational in nature and payment disputes for emergency or urgent medical services. The Department also has a toll-free telephone number **(1-888-HMO-2219)** and a TDD line **(1-877-688-9891)** for the hearing and speech impaired.

The Department's Internet Web site **www.hmohelp.ca.gov** has complaint forms, IMR application forms, and instructions online.

## Not Sure Who Your Primary Care Dentist Is?

Every Western Dental member is assigned to a primary care dental office (a "PCD"). The PCD will provide for the general dental needs of its assigned members. If you do not know who your PCD is, or if you would like to change your PCD, you can contact Western Dental to request a provider directory or specific information regarding your PCD or other PCDs in your area. The information that Western Dental can provide includes location and contact information for the PCD as well



as the PCD's professional degree, board certifications, whether or not the PCD is accepting new patients at this time, and any recognized subspecialty qualifications a specialist may have.

For assistance or to receive a copy of the Western Dental Provider Directory for your area, please contact Western Dental by telephone at **1-800-992-3366**, by email at **MemberServices@westerndental.com**, at our Western Dental website (**www.westerndental.com**) or by mail at Western Dental Benefits Division, **530 S. Main Street, Orange, CA 92868**. We will be happy to help you select your PCD and begin your oral health care relationship.