

# Are You "Certified Kissable?"

Time for your next dental visit? Your health - your life - may depend on it.



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Do you know what it takes to be "Certified Kissable?" Most likely, a lot more than you think. Even if your smile looks healthy, there's a good chance you have gum disease (otherwise known as periodontal disease) lurking around those pearly whites. Scientific research shows that up to 80 percent of the adult population has some level of periodontal disease – a staggering health statistic. Even worse, only 10% know they have gum disease, and even less are being treated. To top it off, gum disease is an infectious disease easily spread within families and close circles of friends. In fact, if one person in the family is diagnosed with periodontal disease, the American Academy of Periodontology recommends that the entire family be evaluated.

## *What is Periodontal (Gum) Disease?*

It is a bacterial infection and the number one reason for tooth loss. The infection can destroy the gums as it erodes away the jaw bone, eventually causing pockets of pus and decaying tissue. Periodontal disease is also believed to play a role in the development and presence of many other diseases in the body. Alarmingly, periodontal disease is a silent disease until symptoms appear, usually in it's mid to late stages.

## *An Inflammatory Disease*

Gum disease is an inflammatory disease, which is why it is able to be so destructive to every organ, every cell in the body. Inflammation is known to be the root cause of nearly all degenerative disease, including cancer. As an active, bacterial infection, periodontal disease is contagious. You can therefore, catch it through mouth to mouth kissing and sharing drinks and food.

## *The Mouth-Body Connection*

Controlling your dental health is critical if you want to keep your teeth. A healthy mouth is also key to your overall health -- the bacteria that cause gum disease can spread from your mouth to the rest of your body. Research has shown links between gum disease and premature birth, as well as other complications during pregnancy. Periodontal disease can also worsen diabetes which can then worsen the periodontal disease. This insidious disease is also linked to heart attacks and strokes, lung and kidney diseases and may be a factor in multiple cancers, as well as Alzheimer's disease. In essence,

periodontal disease can be life-threatening. Physicians are now recognizing the critical importance of best-possible dental health for their patients.

## *Do You Have the Gene for Periodontal Disease?*

According to dental research, one-third of the population has a genetic marker for the disease. Having the genetic marker, however, doesn't mean you must "kiss your teeth goodbye." It just means you are at greater risk. Anyone, at any age, can be easily tested for the genetic marker for periodontal disease via a simple DNA-PCR salivary test, but the genetic test isn't necessary for every patient. We find it especially helpful for establishing proper home care and professional maintenance protocols for someone who is at increased risk for the disease. If you don't have the genetic marker – you're not in the clear – you can still get periodontal disease. Remember, about 80% of the population have periodontal disease and only 33% have the genetic marker. If you have periodontal disease AND the genetic-marker, more attentive treatment and prevention is required. If you have the genetic marker for periodontal disease, chances are that you also have inherited a genetic risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and many other diseases.

## *What Dangerous Bacteria is Causing Your Disease?*

If diagnosed with periodontal disease, an important test is the bacterial DNA salivary test which assesses the specific type and number of destructive periodontal bacteria in your mouth, ie, the bacteria which are causing YOUR disease. By knowing the results of this test, targeted systemic treatment can be designed for your disease if necessary, and healing accelerated. The test, which typically costs less than \$200, is important for someone diagnosed with periodontal disease, considering dental surgery and/or major dental treatment.

## *Zero Tolerance for Bleeding Gums*

As for prevention, it's important to get in early for proper treatment and testing if you show any signs of gum disease such as bad breath or bleeding when you brush or floss. There should be a zero tolerance for bleeding gums -- our profession and the public is slowly beginning to realize this fact. Imagine your scalp bleeding when you brush your hair. NEVER normal! Simply put, if your gums bleed you have the disease. The next time you have your teeth cleaned, ask if your gums are bleeding. Gums should never bleed.

# Do You Have What It Takes?

To be Certified Kissable....

## *Treatment Must Be Multi-faceted*

In the past, scalpel/suture surgery was the typical treatment for periodontal disease. Nowadays, we have many other options for treatment. Because periodontal disease is such a complex disease, its successful treatment and management requires a multi-faceted approach. There are many steps you can take to avoid gum surgery or loss of teeth, as long as you are under a watchful professional eye. Gentle laser therapy for the treatment of periodontal disease can dramatically reduce the need for traditional surgery. We enjoy helping our patients' and their physicians manage their total body health – a natural result of treating our patients' periodontal disease.

## *Healing from the Inside Out . . . And the Outside-In*

Proper nutrition helps to boost the integrity of the entire immune system, and nourish the oral soft tissues. It is important to realize that the soft tissue in the mouth is the most vulnerable tissue in the body and the periodontal bacteria living in the mouth are some of the most aggressive bacteria living anywhere in the body.

## *Help Your Gums, Prevent Decay and Whiten Your Teeth all at Once!*

As part of treatment, and for follow-up, a special mouthrinse and toothpaste is recommended, along with specific home care, often with a rotary toothbrush, an oral irrigator and toothpicks, floss or specific brushes which clean between your teeth. Special oral pro-biotics dissolved once a day are also valuable to flood your mouth with good bacteria and prevent tooth decay. Oral pro-biotics can also whiten your teeth at the same time!

## *Periodontal Disease is Manageable...*

Unfortunately, once you've been diagnosed with gum disease, you'll always be at risk for recurrence. Your dentist and/or hygienist will monitor your gum health with professional preventive treatment. Periodontal disease doesn't have to be a death sentence for you or your teeth. But diligence is always necessary. Research shows that healthy gums can become diseased within 36 hours of neglect. Think about it -- what other part of our body requires such diligent care in order to prevent disease?

## *Are You "Certified Kissable?"*

Is it time for your next dental visit? Your health – your life – may depend on it. Call for a complimentary periodontal screening - a \$127 value per person - for you and a loved one today and make your smile "Certified Kissable."



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Dr. Lisa Marie Samaha graduated from the Medical College of Virginia School of Dentistry, Virginia Commonwealth University, and has been in the private practice of General Dentistry in Newport News since 1982. Her practice philosophy centers on comprehensive dental care, especially for the individual with severe, even debilitating levels of dental disease. Her care also includes advanced cosmetic and periodontal therapy, including the treatment of sleep apnea and snoring, migraines and TMJ problems. In addition to her well established private practice, Dr Samaha has a widespread reputation as the Founder and Director of the Perio Arts Institute, nationally recognized for teaching and research. The Institute's mission is focused on developing and sharing diagnostic and treatment protocols for the betterment of oral and systemic health.



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