USACHPPM
Readiness thru Health

22-032-0307

Just the Facts...

Oral Fitness During Deployment
Periodontal Disease

Why is oral fitness important?

Today's Soldiers need to stay physically fit and healthy in order to support their unit's preparations and deploy rapidly to any region of the globe. Combat-ready Soldiers need healthy mouths for:

1. Communication (speaking, smiling, or whistling). The teeth work with the lips and tongue to make the sounds that we use for talking.

2. Energy intake (tasting, chewing, and swallowing). A healthy, high-fiber diet requires chewing. Your body can get more vitamins and nutrients from food after it has been chewed.

Oral diseases interfere with these functions, and can cause severe, life-threatening illness. Every time a Soldier has to be transported out of the area of operations for dental treatment, they expose themselves and their fellow Soldiers to attacks from insurgents. Soldiers who do not take care of their mouths could put their buddies in the line of fire.

There are three major causes of dental casualties during training and deployments:

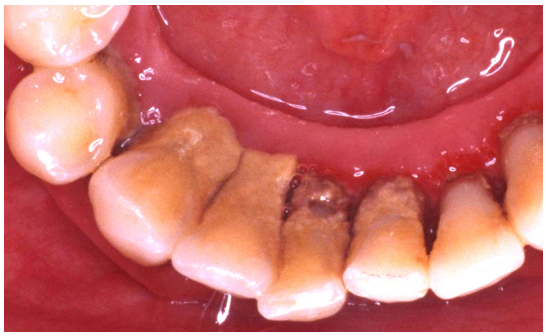
- Periodontal disease (or gum disease)
- Painful or infected wisdom teeth
- Dental caries (tooth decay)

The reddened areas along the edges of the gums are due to gingivitis

What causes Periodontal Disease?

Periodontal disease is an infection of the gums and bones that surround the teeth and hold them in place. It all starts with plaque, a sticky coating that grows on your teeth every day. Leaving the plaque in place for just a few days can cause your gums to become red, irritated, tender, and bleed easily. This condition is known as gingivitis (bleeding gums). Plaque that is left on the teeth gradually hardens into calculus (tartar).

Bacteria, or germs, live and grow in the plaque and calculus. Their waste toxins, or poisons, irritate the gums. When your body tries to fight off the bacteria, it destroys the fibers that hold the gums onto the teeth. The gums may pull away from the teeth and form pockets that are filled with bacteria and pus. As the pockets get deeper, the bone around the teeth gets destroyed. Smoking makes gum disease worse.



Sore, bleeding gums are revealed after heavy calculus is removed from these teeth

What are the symptoms of periodontal disease?

As with all oral diseases, periodontal disease is like a ticking time bomb. Sometimes the gums swell, become red or sore, and may bleed during brushing or flossing. Many people have no signs of periodontal disease, except bad breath or some blood or pus from between the tooth and gum. The teeth may become loose or tilted, causing problems when biting or chewing. Eventually they will fall out or have to be pulled.

Gum disease is just like any other infection. It can become very painful and cause swelling of the jaw or face. If the infection is not treated, it can spread to your throat or to your brain and cause death.

ORAL FITNESS
PMCS YOUR MOUTH!

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Who can get periodontal disease?

Things that interfere with your body's ability to fight infection will increase your risk of gum disease. Examples are: smoking, poor nutrition, stress, pregnancy, diabetes, leukemia and AIDS. Some people are more prone to gum disease due to heredity.

However, anyone who does not clean their teeth can get gum disease. Unfortunately, many deployed Soldiers stop cleaning their mouths every day. Many also engage in harmful oral habits, such as tobacco use and excessive consumption of sugary drinks or snacks, to stay alert or deal with the stress of deployment. Soldiers who do not take care of their mouths during deployment develop severe dental problems that require numerous visits to the dental clinic for dental reconstruction upon redeployment.

This Soldier's poor oral hygiene has led to serious periodontal disease

How can I prevent periodontal disease?

Avoid becoming a dental casualty by attaining Dental Class 1 (no dental treatment needed) before you deploy. Have a dental exam and a cleaning every year to detect and treat gum disease as soon as possible.

Use Combat Stress Control techniques to deal with the stress of deployment, instead of harmful oral habits. People who are prone to gum disease must be especially careful to take care of their mouths. Just like a good motor sergeant uses a PMCS schedule (preventive maintenance, checks and services) to keep his/her vehicles running, you need to PMCS your mouth during deployment to stay fit and healthy!

DAILY	
Clean Your Mouth	**Watch What You Put In Your Mouth**
Floss daily to remove plaque (bacteria) and food particles that stick on and in between your teeth where a toothbrush cannot reach. Any kind of floss will do, as long as it fits in between your teeth easily and is easy to hold. Your gums may bleed when you first start flossing every day. If bleeding continues to happen after a week or two of flossing, see your dentist.	Avoid or cut back on tobacco. Smokeless tobacco wears away your gums and increases your risk of tooth decay and gum disease. It causes white leathery patches that can turn into oral cancer. Smoking can cause gum disease, bone loss, tooth loss, and oral cancer.
Brush after meals or before sleeping to remove food debris, plaque buildup and bacteria. Use a toothbrush with a small head that fits around the back teeth and can clean everywhere.	Eat healthy foods from the 5 major food groups. Your mouth needs nutrients such as vitamins A, C, D, E, B2, Niacin, B6, B12, Folic Acid, and minerals such as Zinc, Iron, and Calcium to repair the lining of your mouth, maintain your gums, and prevent bone loss around your teeth.
Use fluoride toothpaste and a gentle, circular motion for 2 minutes	Limit drinks that are sweetened with decay-causing sugars (fructose, glucose or sucrose and high fructose corn syrup). They include sports drinks, energy drinks, sodas, and punch.
• No toothpaste? Use table salt, baking soda or water	Limit sugary, sticky, or starchy between-meal snacks
Don't rinse, eat or drink for 30 minutes afterwards to allow the toothpaste to protect your teeth	Eat tooth-friendly snack foods that protect or improve your oral health such as:

• No toothbrush?
  • Swish with water after eating
  • Wipe teeth with a clean cloth
	• Nuts, fruit, raw vegetables, plain yogurt, or cheddar cheese (hardens tooth surface) do not promote decay-causing bacteria

If you have gum disease, your dentist might prescribe an antibacterial mouthrinse for you to use daily.	• Black tea contains fluoride
Toothbrush, toothpaste, and dental floss are available in the Health and Comfort Pack (HCP), Type I (NSN 8970-01-368-9154)	Use gum or mints that contain xylitol as the first ingredient, for about 5 minutes after eating meals or snacks. Xylitol is a natural sweetener that blocks bacteria from turning starchy/sugary foods into acids that cause dental caries. Xylitol gum can be found in the accessory pack of the MRE.