

TREATING PERIODONTAL DISEASE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A PAINFUL PROCESS

By Dr. Vito Clarizio

I know that the traditional treatments used for periodontal disease (gum disease), which occurs when a bacterial infection fills the pocket between your tooth and gums can be extremely painful. The traditional treatments for this disease are either scaling and root planing or surgery, which involve sharp instruments, scraping, cutting, and stitching of the infected area.

However, I am happy to report that no longer needs to be the case. With LANAP (Laser-Assisted New Attachment Procedure), which is FDA approved, we now have a much gentler process that has been shown to produce long-lasting results. This process actually removes affected gum tissue without the use of sharp instruments and invasive procedures. With periodontal disease, the connective tissue that holds the tooth to the bone is destroyed and up until now, that connection has been permanently lost. LANAP provides a treatment that can bring the disease under control because it promotes actual re-growth of connective tissue.

Patients experience no pain during the surgery and gone are the days of painful recovery as well. To begin the process, I numb your teeth and gums and then place a laser fiber that is about the size of a pin into the area between your tooth and gums. The laser then emits a light that eliminates bacteria and diseased tissue. And LANAP uses a pulsing laser that can actually differentiate between healthy and diseased gum tissue. Once it identifies the infected areas, the laser destroys them and as the dentist performing the procedure, I then use the laser to disturb the healthy tissue, causing it to reattach to the bone. In the final step of the procedure, I use the laser to create a seal over the gum to prevent re-infection.

The time spent in the dentist's chair for LANAP is greatly reduced from the treatment time needed for traditional approaches. For LANAP, two 2-hour visits along with a few follow-up visits to monitor a patient's progress are all it takes. And the recovery time, instead of being days, is less than 24 hours, which means patients no longer have to miss several days of work as is often necessary with gum surgery.

Not only does LANAP arrest the development of periodontal disease and the damage it causes, the procedure helps to reduce tooth loss that is often the result of advanced gum disease. Chances of gum disease reoccurring are greatly reduced because of the re-growth of connective tissues, and side effects experienced by patients from the procedure are minimal.

Since periodontal disease has been linked to heart disease, it can absolutely be a "silent killer" that needs to be treated. At this point in time, the LANAP procedure is an effective and desirable procedure available for the treatment of this disease.

Another benefit of using this procedure vs the traditional periodontal surgery is that you may not have to stop taking medications such as aspirin or other anticoagulants such as Coumadin, Plavix etc. in order to have the treatment and there is no concern about excess post-op bleeding.