

**CHARTER**  
**National Periodontal**  
**Disease Coalition**

According to the Surgeon General's Report on "Oral Health in America" (May 2000), most adult Americans suffer from periodontal disease, often called gum disease. It is one of the most prevalent chronic diseases in America, yet remains what former Surgeon General David Satcher called a "silent epidemic."

Millions of Americans who have periodontal disease may be unaware of the infection in their mouths. Periodontal disease is the chief cause of tooth loss in adults, and can have a devastating impact on oral function. Moreover, recent studies have demonstrated a strong potential link between periodontal disease and other adverse health conditions, such as heart attacks, diabetes, strokes, and pre-term births. There is, therefore, a need for further research as well as for a campaign to educate and provide information to all Americans on the importance of oral health and the prevention and treatment of periodontal disease.

Untreated periodontal disease can exact a heavy psychological and economic toll. Studies have shown that people with compromised oral health lack confidence, suffer from low self-esteem, and are less likely to find work, or be promoted. The financial costs for ignoring periodontal disease are often too much to bear for individuals, businesses and the government, the latter often bearing the burden of direct medical costs for the consequences of periodontal disease. To this are added the additional costs of work and school absenteeism, and lost productivity.

In consequence of the "silent epidemic" of periodontal disease and all its attending dental, medical, social, and economic conditions, a National Periodontal Disease Coalition is being formed. This Coalition, with membership drawn from the spectrum of communities of direct and related interests across the private, public, and non-profit sectors, will work to establish a forum for increasing the public's awareness and understanding of periodontal disease, its prevention, and new treatment methods. The Coalition is open to all who support this goal and are willing to work to meet it.

Submitted by Oral Health America on behalf of the  
National Periodontal Disease Coalition  
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