

# Periodontal screening: A basic part of the orthodontic examination

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**A**lthough orthodontists take great pride in the quality of diagnostic records used in planning treatment, an effective method of screening for periodontal disease is often lacking. As adults continue to seek the benefits of orthodontic treatment, this lack of consistent documentation of periodontal findings becomes critical. More than half of all people over age 18 have at least some early stage of periodontal disease. After age 35, about 3 out of 4 adults are affected by some form of periodontal disease. At the same time, according to the ADA, many Americans believe that bleeding gums are normal, indicating that they fail to recognize the early signs and symptoms of periodontal disease.

Two relatively simple additions to the orthodontist's standardized diagnostic records gathered on adults would greatly enhance the recognition of potential periodontal problems as well as satisfy dental-legal requirements in the area of monitoring and record keeping.

1. Require posterior vertical bitewing radiographs of all molars and premolars.
2. Implement the new periodontal evaluation system called Periodontal Screening and Recording (PSR) as endorsed by the American Dental Association and the American Academy of Periodontology. (Periodontal Screening and Recording and PSR are trademarks and service marks of the American Dental Association.)

If you do not already supplement your panoramic radiographs with posterior vertical

bitewings, consider making this change. Instead of taking horizontal bitewings, simply turn the film vertically. This radiograph will reveal the maxillary and mandibular crestal bone levels so important to the early diagnosis of periodontal disease.

Implementing the Periodontal Screening and Recording system (PSR) will take slightly more discipline, but with immense benefits to both you and your adult patients. Simplicity is the core element of PSR. Instead of the time-consuming charting associated with a comprehensive full-mouth periodontal examination, the mouth is divided into sextants and only the deepest probing depth of each sextant is recorded in the patient's record using a unique PSR code. Only six scores are recorded (one for each sextant) instead of the potential 192 using the standard periodontal exam. For patients in good periodontal health, use of PSR requires very little chair time and still allows the clinician to monitor patient health. The key component of PSR is a specially designed periodontal probe that features a 0.5 mm balled end and a colored band extending 3.5 to 5.5 mm from the tip. The balled tip enhances patient comfort while it aids in the detection of overhanging margins and subgingival calculus. These PSR probes are available in plastic or metal and are produced by several manufacturers.

Orthodontists may decide to limit use of PSR to those patients over 25 years of age when initiating the program. PSR is not intended to replace a complete periodontal examination or referral to a

periodontist. It is a screening system to indicate when more comprehensive examination is required.

With corporate support by the Procter & Gamble Company, public education programs will be launched when a majority of the dental profession has had an opportunity to incorporate PSR into the office routine. To order a PSR informational packet call the ADA at 312-440-2500, ext. 2807, or use the ADA toll free line.

Periodontal disease is the leading cause of tooth loss in adults. It is recognized by the dental pro-

fession, and increasingly by the public, as a significant health problem. Although orthodontic treatment may be beneficial to many adults, it must follow the early detection and treatment of periodontal disease. To achieve this goal, posterior vertical bitewing radiographs should be included in the diagnostic records required to plan orthodontic treatment. In addition, it is time for the Periodontal Screening and Recording system (PSR) to become part of every adult orthodontic examination.