



The Dallas Morning News: Richard Michael Pratt

Dentist Marshal Goldberg treats gum disease. Here he is pictured between the jaws of a model mouth.

## MOUTH TRAPS

By Kara Douglass  
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**W**hen you think of a "kissing disease," periodontitis — also known as gum disease — probably is not the first word that spills from your lips. But you might want to move it right up there with the dreaded

■ Recognizing periodontal disease. **6C**

mononucleosis. According to dental researchers, there's evidence that the bacteria that cause gum disease can be passed between spouses.

A study published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association* showed a 20 percent to 30 percent probability of bacteria transmission between spouses, judged by the presence of similar bacteria in married couples.

That means when you talk yourself out of flossing tonight, the loved one you smooch before bedtime could fall prey to your plaque.

But, experts say, there's no need to panic, because there are primarily two ways the bacteria goes on to form plaque, which eventually leads to gum disease: You're either genetically predisposed

Please see HOW on Page 6C.

**You can catch gum disease from others if you're not careful**



For removing plaque, sonic toothbrushes, including the Sensonic (above) and the Sonicare (left) work well. They are a bit pricey, though, starting at \$90 and running as high as \$150.

### HOW TO BRUSH IT OFF

Many advances have been made in fighting periodontitis. Here are some of the latest:

■ Sonic toothbrushes, which can help remove plaque from around delicate gum lines, have bristles that wave at sonic speed. Sonicare and Sensonic make the new brushes, which can be found at dentists' offices or retail outlets for about \$90 to \$150.

■ Tongue scraping is a way to rid the tongue of bacteria that may cause gum disease. The surface of the tongue has lots of nooks and crannies that harbor bacteria; a tongue scraper acts as a rake to scoop it off. Most dentists carry them for about \$3 to \$15.

■ Total, the new toothpaste made by Colgate, contains the active ingredient Triclosan, an antimicrobial agent found in antibacterial soap.

■ The Periodontitis Susceptibility Test (PST) is a finger-prick blood test that detects a person's genetic susceptibility for periodontal disease. It costs approximately \$200; some dental health plans cover the test. Ask your dentist.

— Kara Douglass

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