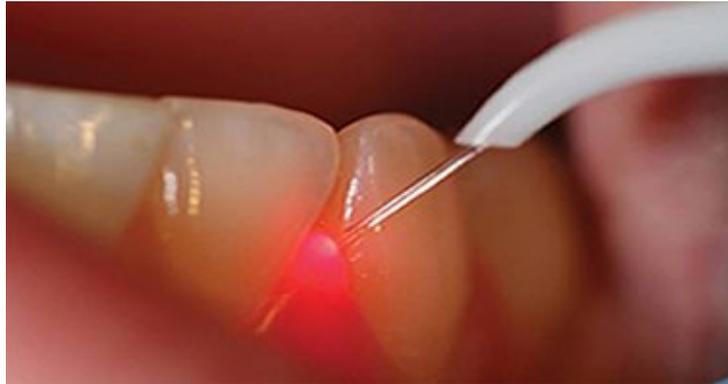


Laser Therapy



Lasers in dentistry are nothing new. In fact, lasers have been used in dentistry for the past 20 years in one capacity or another. Originally, their use was restorative in nature – painless decay removal and tooth preparations for fillings. Laser use has now expanded to the field of periodontics in treatment for periodontal disease, and even in endodontics for root canal therapy. The use of lasers in the treatment of periodontal disease, however, is a rather new venture.

How does laser therapy work?

The idea behind the use of lasers in treating periodontal disease involves the removal of the infected or diseased tissue, which is colored differently than healthy tissue. This tissue removal thereby encourages growth and attachment of new and healthy tissue to the tooth root. Laser therapy occurs in several stages, allowing the tissue to heal up the surface of the root.

How is therapy different from traditional treatment?

Traditional pocket reduction procedures (often called osseous or flap surgery) work in a similar fashion. Diseased tissue and disease-causing bacteria are removed before securing the tissue into place. In some cases, irregular surfaces of the damaged bone are smoothed to limit areas where disease-causing bacteria can hide. This allows the gum tissue to better reattach to healthy bone. Both methods require removal of bacterial deposits from the root surface so that tissue may heal to the root surface. In laser therapy, it heals in increments, and in traditional therapy the tissue heals all at once.

Is laser therapy effective?

Traditional treatment methods have a proven track record over many years of saving and keeping teeth. Laser therapy, however, has neither the benefit of a track record or a substantial body of peer-reviewed research showing that it works at least as well as proven methods for treatment of periodontal disease. There are many different brands, wavelengths, and types of lasers available

for treatment of periodontal disease, and there has not been a consistent consensus as to the benefit of utilizing laser technology in periodontal therapy.

What does all of this mean?

All in all, lasers in the treatment of periodontal disease are showing some promise for treatment. However, for now, they remain an unproven method for treatment and simply a “tool in the toolbox,” rather than the definitive solution to periodontal disease. We urge all patients to make themselves aware and beware of advertising that sounds too good to be true, because it very well may be.

Many things should be considered before choosing a method of treatment with your doctor. This includes their experience with traditional treatment, as well as new modalities of treatment (laser therapy), the amount of training they have (general dentist vs. periodontist), and the amount of treatment for periodontal disease they perform (is treatment for periodontal disease the focus of their practice?).

We are here to help you with every treatment decision that you make. If you have questions as to what method of treatment is right for your level of periodontal disease and need help separating fact from hype, please feel free to contact us for a comprehensive examination.