

Dept. of  
Dental Surgery

Editor's  
Pick

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**It's like this. My upper left cavity has a tooth missing. I have delayed treatment for a myriad of reasons, and I did not think it was a big deal. However, lately, the neighbouring tooth has been shaky too. Could I ask what is the exact cause?**

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You should receive dental treatment as soon as possible. The longer you wait the more teeth you are going to lose.

According to your description, there are 2 possible reasons for your loose tooth or tooth loss:

**1.** Gum disease (periodontal disease) is an infection of the gums and bone supporting your teeth. It is a major cause of tooth loss in adults. Gum disease is caused by bacterial plaque which causes inflammation of the gums. Gingivitis is a mild form of gum disease that is still reversible with daily brushing and flossing, and regular scaling by a dentist. If gingivitis is not treated, it can progress to “periodontitis”. This is when the gums start to pull away from the teeth and are filled with plaque and become infected. If left untreated, rapid loss of tissue and bone may eventually lead to loose teeth.

You may have periodontal disease if you have:

- Bleeding gums when brushing
- Red, swollen, puffy-looking or tender gums
- Abscesses on the gum
- Pus secreting from between the teeth and gums
- Shaky teeth
- Teeth appearing to drift apart from its original position
- Receding gumline (gum recession)
- Persistent bad breath
- Vague discomfort or dull-ache of gums and teeth

The main factors of gum disease are poor dental hygiene, smoking or chewing tobacco, genetics, crooked teeth that are hard to keep clean, pregnancy, diabetes and some medications. You may have gum disease and not having any signs and symptoms as gum disease is usually painless.



**2.** Bone loss occurs in the area where tooth is extracted. Bone loss will start immediately because there is no longer stimulation in the bone where the tooth used to be. As the bone starts disintegrating, the surrounding teeth start losing support, which can lead to the loosening or loss of healthy neighbouring teeth. It can also lead to drifting of neighbouring teeth, whereby the adjacent teeth lean over into the vacant space where the teeth have been lost. Similarly, loss of teeth can lead to the shifting of opposing teeth as they drift down into the open space (super-erupt).

Based on what we have discussed above, there is a treatment plan for your missing teeth and must replace your missing teeth as soon as possible to prevent loss of the teeth.

Denture, Implant or Bridge can prevent further loss of neighbouring teeth.

First, replace the missing teeth with denture. Denture can prevent further loss of neighbouring teeth. Wearing a denture is economical, but it may dislodge when chewing. Denture is not recommended to those who have periodontal disease, because it traps food easily and must keep it clean every day. Denture may also cause gum and bone resorption due to over compression over a long period of usage.

Second, replace the missing teeth with implant is the best choice. Implant function individually to prevent further loss of bone and give a maximum chewing benefit.

Third, replace the missing teeth with bridges. Bridge involves cutting and damaging the neighboring teeth.

Scaling and polishing should be done every six months. It helps to prevent gum recession and gum diseases which are the main cause of tooth loss and shaky teeth.

**Dr Raymond Lim has been at the forefront of patient-centric dental care services and professional expertise since 2005. The National University of Singapore (NUS) alumnus who received a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (B.D.S) has advanced his professional career with three years at National Dental Centre treating trauma and emergency patients and a two-year post at polyclinics as the overall in charge. His subsequent years in private practice have further spurred his passion in implantology; he was awarded Aesthetic Implant Dentistry from the University of Uclan (UK) in 2011.**

**Founding B9 Dental Centre in 2013, Dr Raymond has seen early success with its current group of three dental centres within the first year. Lauded for their comprehensive expertise and trusted service, B9 Dental Centre was awarded with Top 10 Special Achievement in Dental Care Awards by Promising SME 500 2014.**

