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## An *Emusing* Treatment for Gum Disease

By Myra Charleston

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If your gums are healthy, they fit tightly around the teeth, are pink or brown and do not bleed easily. Unfortunately, periodontitis (gum disease) is so common in adults that an estimated 80% of the population over the age of 35 develop some form of gum disease. 70% of adult tooth loss is due to gum disease rather than tooth decay.

Periodontal disease is caused by plaque, that sticky deposit of bacteria, mucus and food particles deposited at the base of the teeth when we eat. The bacteria produce destructive toxins and enzymes, which in turn cause the gum tissues to detach and separate from the tooth. This forms the 'periodontal pocket' which continues to collect plaque, which in turn causes the pockets to deepen and destroy the surrounding tissues. The pockets are rated by a "Periodontal Index" scoring system that rates the degree of destruction. Scores range from 0 (no destruction) to 8 (complete destruction). By the time scores reach the 4 to 8 range, the disease is considered in the terminal stage and the tooth is usually extracted. In the early stages, the disease can be reversed, but if recent research is correct, untreated gum disease can do far more than take your teeth. There is evidence that people with periodontal disease are twice as likely to have fatal heart attacks or respiratory infections. Pregnant women run the risk of premature or low birth weight babies. Diabetics with periodontal disease find it more difficult to regulate their sugar levels.

In 1992 Deb Henson was diagnosed with gum disease. She had deep periodontal pockets (in the 5 to 8 range) and her gums were swollen and bleeding. Her dentist wanted to send her to a periodontist, but Deb resisted, knowing that surgery was sure to follow. "I asked what I could do to put off seeing a periodontist and the surgery. He suggested I floss, floss and floss some more. And come in for cleaning every 3 months." Deb says that she did not floss as suggested but she did come in for the cleaning. While her gums improved over the next few years, they were still bleeding halfway between visits and she still had some deep pockets. Then on May 2, 1997, she surprised her dentist. "My gums did not

bleed during the cleaning for the first time, and when the dentist prodded around my gums, even he couldn't get them to bleed. He kept commenting on how 'firm' my gums were, and that he couldn't find any deep pockets anymore." When he asked what she had been doing, Deb explained that she had been brushing with emu oil every day. Explaining that she and her husband raise emus, she told the dentist that she had been putting a drop of emu oil on her toothpaste each day when she brushed.

Deb tells us that her family goes to Associated Dental (formerly Cigna Dental) instead of a private practice dentist. She usually gets a different dentist each visit. In her last visit on October 6, 1999 she was assigned Dr. Robert Brooks who reviewed her charts prior to cleaning and in talking to Deb asked if she used tobacco. When Deb told him she had smoked for over 20 years he told the hygienist "write that in her chart so that we can examine for gum and mouth cancer." Telling Deb that the chance for gum and mouth cancer increases considerably after 20 years, he began the examination. "He couldn't believe the incredible shape my mouth and gums are in for 'all the abuse I give it'." Deb went on to say that Dr. Brooks could not get her gums to bleed – and that they haven't since she began using emu oil on a daily basis. Since the dentist had his hand and instruments in her mouth, Deb was unable to explain what she had been doing to keep her mouth healthy. Fortunately, the hygienist was familiar with Deb's case, knew she had been brushing with emu oil and had witnessed the progression. She told the dentist that Deb had refused the recommended periodontal treatment, opting instead to brush with emu oil every day. She pointed out from the charts that Deb had progressed from pockets of 5-8 to 1-2, with absolutely no activity.

"He reiterated that he can't believe what good shape my gums are in, considering my age (45)," said Deb "and that I am a long term smoker. Once he finished prodding around in my mouth, he leaned back in his chair and said 'ok, tell me about this emu oil and how you are using it.'" Deb related the uses of emu oil and told Dr. Brooks about the feedback she received from her customers that also use emu oil for gum care. Comments have ranged from "it stopped my baby from crying when teething" to reports of easing pain and redness from denture wearers, healing canker sores and stopping gums from bleeding.

"He wanted to know if I have applied for a patent on it," smiles Deb "He said if what I am telling him, and what he has seen on me, are the direct result of using emu oil with my toothpaste once a day, someone is going to make millions off this."

If you are interested in talking to Deb about her experiences with periodontal disease, she may be reached at:

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