

Know Your Score, Build Your Kit

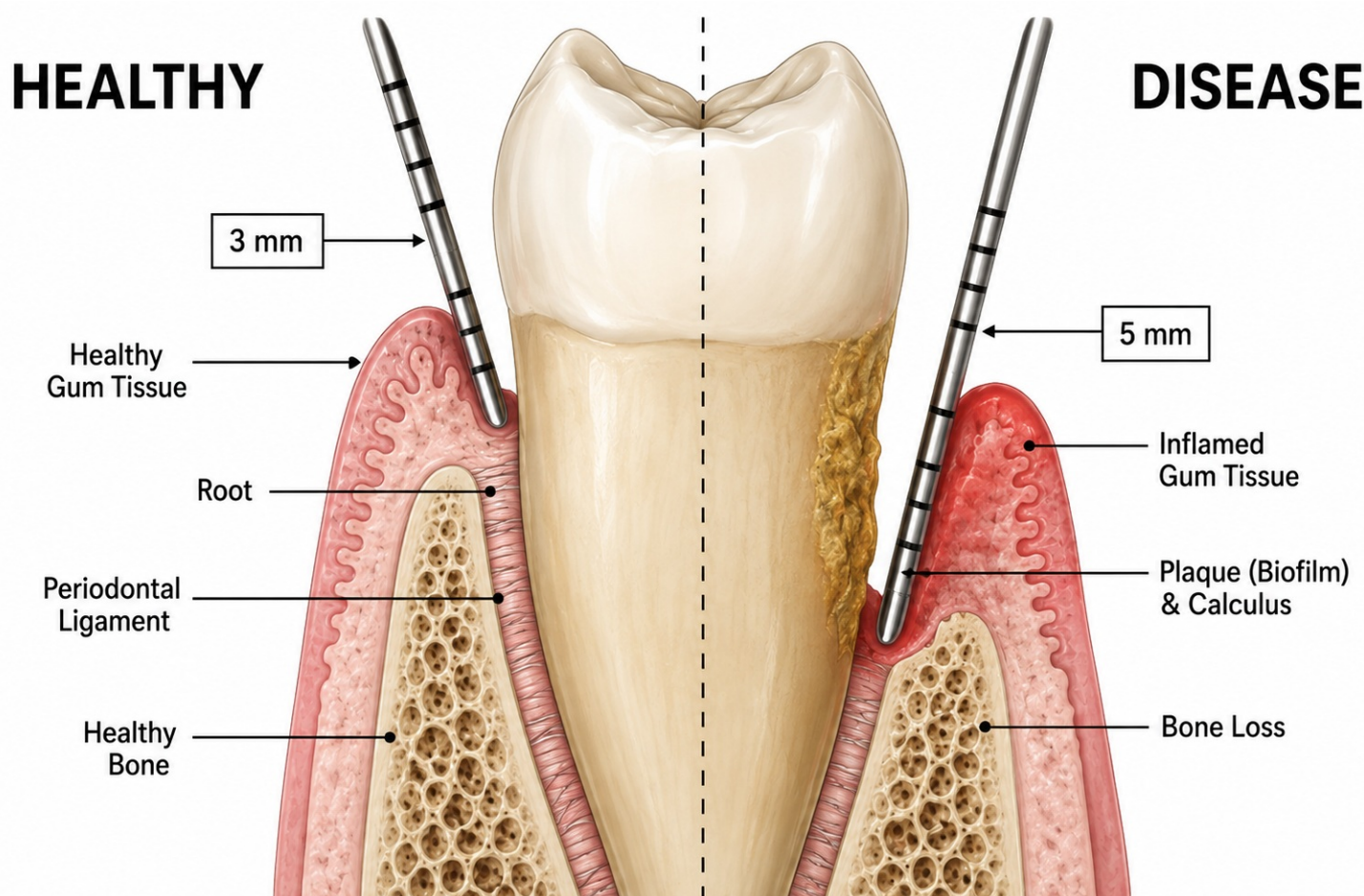
You're given a number from 0 to 4 at every check-up. Here's what it means, and the kit that actually matches it.

At every check-up, your hygienist or dentist calls out a number for each part of your mouth — the BPE score. Most patients nod and move on without really knowing what it means. It's not how your gums feel, and it's not a mark out of ten. It's a screening score for gum disease, and it directly decides what happens next.

What BPE Actually Measures

BPE stands for Basic Periodontal Examination. A small probe is walked gently around each tooth, measuring how deep the gum pockets are and whether they bleed. Your mouth is divided into six areas (called sextants), and each one gets its own score — you'll usually hear the highest score, since that's the one that matters most.

Why it's not about how your gums feel: gum disease is very often painless in its early stages. A score of 2 or higher can exist with no symptoms at all — which is exactly why the screening matters more than how things feel day to day.



What Each Score Means

0 — Healthy. No bleeding, no calculus, shallow pockets. Nothing to treat beyond your normal routine.

1 — Bleeding, otherwise healthy. Gums bleed on gentle probing, but there's no calculus and pockets are still shallow. This is early and fully reversible with better cleaning.

2 — Calculus present. Hardened plaque (calculus) is present above or below the gumline. This needs a proper clean to remove, since calculus can't be brushed away at home once it's hardened.

3 — Moderate pockets. Gum pockets are starting to deepen (4–5mm), meaning some of the support around the tooth is being lost. This needs closer monitoring and a more thorough hygiene approach.

4 — Deep pockets. Pockets of 6mm or more indicate established gum disease with real bone loss around the tooth. This needs active treatment, not just a routine clean.

Matching Your Kit to Your Score

The honest truth is that most people are using roughly the same toothbrush and routine regardless of their actual risk level. Here's what's actually worth changing, by score:

BPE 0–1 — you're already doing fine

No bleeding, minimal calculus. Keep doing what you're doing — this is maintenance, not a fix. A manual or bamboo toothbrush with interdental brushes covers this well.



Bamboo toothbrush



Interdental brushes

BPE 2 — time to step it up

Some calculus, occasional bleeding. Worth upgrading before it becomes a habit you're paying for at every visit. An electric toothbrush and consistent interdental brushes make the real difference here.



Electric toothbrush



Interdental brushes



Interdental picks

BPE 3–4 — bring in the full kit

Bleeding on probing, deeper pockets. A better brush alone won't cut it — you need to actually reach below the gumline. This means an electric toothbrush, a water flosser, interdental picks sized correctly for the gaps, and often a sensitivity toothpaste while things settle.



Electric toothbrush



Water flosser



Sensitivity toothpaste

One score doesn't mean one appointment. A 3 or 4 usually means more frequent hygiene visits for a while, not a one-off deep clean that fixes things permanently. Gum disease is managed, not cured — the good news is it responds well to consistent care.

If you don't know your own BPE score, ask at your next visit. It's your number, and it's worth knowing what it means.