Healthy Gums, Healthy Smile

Nearly half of the U.S. adult population has some form of periodontal (gum) disease[1], a chronic inflammatory disease that affects the gum tissue and bone supporting the teeth. Gum disease can range from simple inflammation (gingivitis) to serious disease that results in major damage to the soft tissue and bone, called periodontitis.

Bacteria in the mouth form plaque (a sticky film) on your teeth. When plaque is not removed with regular brushing and flossing, it causes inflammation of the gums. Gingivitis, the mildest stage of gum disease, can usually be reversed with good oral health habits and regular cleanings.

If not reversed, gingivitis can advance to periodontitis—the most serious stage of gum disease—that causes the gums to pull away from the teeth and form spaces that become infected. If not treated, the supporting bones, gums and tissues are destroyed, which means the teeth may eventually become loose and have to be removed.

Nearly all stages of gum disease are preventable, which is why it is important to take preventive action early. Regular brushing, flossing and visits to your dentist are the best ways to protect your teeth and gums.

Did you know?

Gum disease is associated with other chronic inflammatory diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.[1]

Quick bites

Understand your risks for gum disease:

- **Smoking**: Tobacco use is one of the most significant risk factors associated with gum disease, and it can lower the chances for successful treatment.
- **Diabetes**: People with diabetes are at higher risk for developing infections, including gum disease.
- **Medications**: Many prescription and over-the-counter medications can reduce the flow of saliva and the mouth is more susceptible to infections.
- **Pregnancy**: Nearly 40 percent of pregnant women have some form of gum disease due to hormonal changes throughout the body.
- **Other illnesses and their treatments**: Some diseases, such as AIDS, cancer and their treatments can also have a negative impact on gum health.

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General source: National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, "Periodontal (Gum) Disease: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments," web. **1** American Academy of Periodontology, "CDC: Half of American Adults Have Periodontal Disease," web.

Healthy Smile, Happy Life

Delta Dental of Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee

RC-6335 v1 PA 8/16