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# Do You Have Gum Disease?

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## What is gum disease?

- Gum disease (periodontal disease) is an infection of the gums, jawbone, and supporting structures. The disease is preventable.
- Gum disease can begin at an early age.
- It can be painless and can be difficult to detect in the early stages, except by a dental professional.
- When it is left untreated, it will cause the loss of teeth. Gum disease is the most common cause of tooth loss in adults.
- Studies show that severe gum disease may increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, pneumonia, and the birth of premature and/or low weight babies. Gum disease can also be a complication in diabetes.

## What are the stages of gum disease?

- The earliest stage of gum disease is **gingivitis**. Gums will be puffy, tender, red and bleed easily. Bad breath and a bad taste in your mouth may also be present. Gingivitis is easily reversed by proper daily flossing and brushing.
- When gingivitis is left untreated it will progress to an advanced stage of gum disease called **periodontitis**. Gums will recede or pull away from the teeth. Bone and supporting tissues will be destroyed. Teeth will become loose and may shift and change positions.

- If periodontitis is ignored, teeth will begin to be lost. This is the final stage.

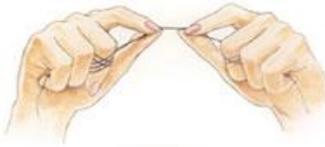
## What causes gum disease?

- Gum disease is caused by plaque and other germs. Plaque is a sticky film of germs that continuously grow on your teeth and gums every day.
- When plaque is not removed each day by brushing and flossing it builds up on the teeth and gums. This causes the gums to turn red and become puffy and tender. Gums will bleed easily, especially when brushed and/or flossed.
- If plaque is not removed it will harden into tartar (calculus). Tartar hides around the teeth and under the gumline.
- When tartar is not removed, pockets form in the gums. Plaque and tartar continue to collect in these pockets and produce by-products that destroy the bone surrounding the teeth.

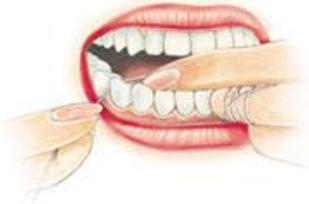
## How do I prevent gum disease?

- Plaque must be **thoroughly** removed every day:
  - **Flossing** is the **only** way to remove plaque from under the gumline and between teeth. A toothbrush cannot reach these areas!

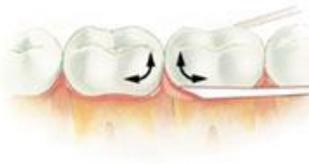
*(turn over)*



Wrap floss around middle fingers (about half an arms length)



Gently guide floss between teeth



Move floss up and down, sliding under gumline, on both adjacent teeth

**Brushing** for two minutes twice a day, in the morning and at bedtime, with a soft-bristled toothbrush



Outside



Inside

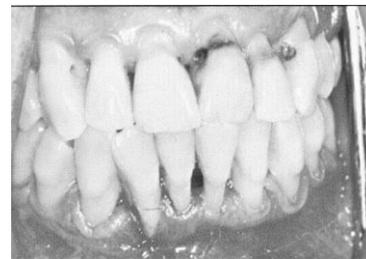


Chewing surfaces

- Tartar must be removed by a dental professional. This procedure is called scaling. Most adults will have varying amounts of tartar, even if oral hygiene practices are good.

### How is gum disease treated?

- The first phase in treating gum disease is to get the gum tissue to heal by removing the cause of the infection. This is done by having the individual follow a careful daily routine which includes flossing and brushing.
- Tartar will be scaled off above and under the gums. This may take several appointments. The teeth will also be polished.
- The second phase is to clean out the deep gum pockets and to eliminate the pockets through oral surgery. Due to loose teeth, your bite may also need to be corrected. This is usually done by a specialist called a periodontist.
- The final phase is a lifetime of oral hygiene maintenance through daily mouth care and regular dental visits.



**Gum disease is preventable!**

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**For more information, call the Oral Health Program at 306-655-4462, or contact us at [oralhealthprogram@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:oralhealthprogram@saskhealthauthority.ca)**

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