

# The Importance of Good Oral Hygiene

## A Big Plaque Attack

When you have gum disease, germs work to destroy your gums (gingiva) and the bone around your teeth. It starts with plaque. Plaque is a sticky film of food, saliva, and germs. Plaque loves to settle at the gum line. There, germs get busy making your gums red, tender, and likely to bleed.

The goal of your daily tooth brushing and flossing is to clean away plaque. When plaque stays put, it hardens into tartar. Tartar builds up under the gum line. More plaque forms over the tartar. Only your dentist or hygienist can get tartar off your teeth.

If plaque and tartar are not cleaned away, even gentle brushing can cause your gums to bleed. This is called gingivitis. It is the first stage of gum disease. You can fight gingivitis with daily good brushing and flossing habits, and getting your teeth cleaned at least twice a year by your hygienist. If you ignore gingivitis, the gum disease gets worse.

The more severe form of gum disease is called periodontitis. When you reach this stage, your gums begin to pull away from your teeth. Pockets form between your teeth and gums. These fill with germs and pus, and deepen. When this happens, you may need gum surgery to save your teeth. If nothing is done, the infection goes on to destroy the bone around your teeth. The teeth may start to move or get loose. Your teeth may fall out or need to be extracted.

**Warning Signs for Diabetics** As if this is not enough, diabetes can make things worse. Plaque is the main bad guy of gum disease. But diabetes can also be a culprit. Diabetes may weaken your mouth's germ-fighting powers. High blood sugar levels can help the gum disease get worse. At the same time, gum disease can make diabetes harder to control.

Often gum disease is painless. You may not even know you have it until you have some serious damage. Regular dentist visits are your best weapon. While gum disease may not hurt, there are warning signs to watch for:

- Bleeding gums when you brush or floss. This bleeding is not normal. Even if your gums don't hurt, get them checked.
- Red, swollen, or tender gums.
- Gums that have pulled away from teeth. Part of the tooth's root may show, or your teeth may look longer.
- Pus between the teeth and gums (when you press on the gums).
- Bad breath.
- Permanent teeth that are loose or moving away from each other.
- Changes in the way your teeth fit when you bite.
- Changes in the fit of partial dentures or bridges.

**Book to see our Hygienist and start your journey to Good Oral Hygiene**

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