

How many people have gum disease?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates 1 in 7 adults between the ages 35 and 44 have some form of gum disease, from gingivitis to severe periodontitis. By age 65, 1 in 4 adults have gum disease. A report by the American Academy of Periodontology estimates 20% to 30% of adults have gum disease serious enough to put them at risk of losing teeth.

What are the signs and symptoms of gum disease?

"People associate disease with pain," says Quinones, "but early gingivitis is usually not painful." She recommends keeping an eye out for signs of a gum problem before things get serious. Here are symptoms to watch out for.

- Swollen or red gums
- Gums that are tender or bleed easily
- Chronic bad breath
- Areas of gum that appear to be pulling back from the teeth
- Pain when chewing
- Sensitive teeth
- Teeth that are loose

How do you treat gum disease?

The stage of gum disease will determine how it is treated. In all cases, however, the goal will be to bring any infection under control and prevent further damage.

- **Scaling and root planning.** For less severe cases of periodontitis, the dentist will remove infection-causing plaque with a method called scaling and root planing. It is essentially a deep cleaning method that removes bacteria from around the gum line and on the tooth root.
- **Medications.** Sometimes antibiotics or antimicrobial medications can reduce the size of gum pockets. These come in the form of mouthrinse, gel, pills, or tiny round particles that the dentist places directly in the pocket.

Surgery. If deep cleaning and medication do not return infected gums to a state of health, surgery is the next step. There are two types of surgery. Flap surgery lifts

away gum tissue so the dentist can clean underneath it; then the tissue is sutured back in place. Gum or bone graft surgery grafts tissue or bone from another part of your mouth onto the damaged part of your gum or jaw.

How can you prevent gum disease?

"You can save yourself a whole lot of problems: pain, money, aggravation, by just doing simple preventive things," says Cram. Caring for your gums involves:

- Brushing your teeth twice a day
- Flossing once a day
- Seeing your dentist for regular check-ups and cleanings

Even if you brush and floss without fail, a professional cleaning can remove tartar that your toothbrush cannot. While two cleanings a year works for some people, your dentist or hygienist may suggest a more frequent schedule if your gums and teeth show signs of damage.

In addition, behaviors that are good for your overall health also help protect your gums. These include not smoking and eating a healthy diet that's low on sugar and high on whole grains.

When your dentist asks about your health history, she's not being nosy. If you are pregnant or have a family history of diabetes, stroke, or heart disease, let your dentist know. Your dentist or hygienist will also want to know what medications you are taking — some of them increase your risk of gum disease. And be ready to tell your dentist or hygienist if you have noticed any signs of bleeding or swelling in your gums, or loose or painful teeth.

A little extra attention to your gums can keep your whole smile beautiful for many years to come.

tuscany dental centre ▲▲☀▲



YOUR GUIDE TO GUM DISEASE SYMPTOMS AND HEART DISEASE

tuscany dental centre ▲▲☀▲

2078, 11300 Tuscany Blvd NW
Calgary AB T3L 2V7

Ph 403-239-0010 Fax 403-239-0011
Email tuscdent@telus.net

Your Guide to Gum Disease Symptoms and Heart Disease

Could gum disease be harming your heart? Learn how to spot problems and practice good oral care.

By R. Morgan Griffin

WebMD Feature

Reviewed by Charlotte E. Grayson Mathis, MD

WebMD Feature Archive

How do you know if gum disease may threaten your heart health? While the connection isn't yet proven beyond a doubt, plenty of evidence points to dental disorders such as periodontal disease (disease of the gums and bones that support the teeth) and gum disease (also called gingivitis) having something to do with heart disease. Until researchers are sure, the best defense is to adopt good oral health habits and be on the lookout for problems with your teeth and gums.

"Healthy gums are firm, light pink, and very elastic," says periodontist Sally Cram, DDS, a spokeswoman for the American Dental Association. So if that description doesn't fit the gums in your mouth, it's time for a checkup. Watch for these symptoms of gum disease:

- Red, swollen gums
- Bleeding after you floss or brush
- Receding gums or noticing that you seem to see more of a tooth than you used to
- Pus on the gums
- Pain when you bite or chew
- Loose teeth

Some people are genetically more prone to periodontal and gum disease than others. So if it runs in your family, you should be especially vigilant. Get any symptoms checked out right away.

Specific conditions that might be related to heart disease are:

What is gum disease?

Pamela Quinones, RDH, president of the American Dental Hygienists' Association, wishes that more people paid attention to their gums. "Most people go to the dentist because they're worried about cavities," Quinones tells WebMD. "But once you reach a certain age, gum disease is a more important concern."

Just as your skin protects your muscles, bones, and major organs, your gums protect your teeth and the structures that hold them in place. Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, starts when plaque, made up of bacteria, mucus, and food particles, invades the small space between your gums and teeth. If left to fester, your gums can become infected, putting them and your teeth at risk. If gum disease progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult, painful, and expensive to treat.

- **Gingivitis.** This early stage of gum disease develops when bacteria build up in the gap between the gums and a tooth. Symptoms may be mild, but you might notice some redness, swelling, or bleeding. The only treatments you usually need are improved brushing and flossing habits.
- **Periodontitis.** This is a more advanced form of gum disease, when the infection has gone deeper. The bacteria release toxins that make the surrounding tissue swell and infected pockets form between the teeth and gums. Over time, the infection can damage the bone beneath the gums, causing the gums to recede from the teeth.
- **Pericoronitis.** This condition can happen when the wisdom teeth only partly push up through the gums, creating an opening for food or plaque to lodge under a flap of gum around the tooth. The tissue becomes swollen, painful, and infected. If the pericoronitis is severe, the swelling can move to the cheeks and neck.
- **Cavities.** Cavities, tiny holes in the teeth caused by tooth decay, are also caused by bacteria, but by a different sort of bacteria than the ones that cause gum disease. Cavities can still play a role in gum disease. For instance, if you have a cavity that irritates the gum, it can lead to gingivitis or periodontitis.
- **Other dental and periodontal problems.** Abscesses, missing teeth, and many other problems can directly or indirectly irritate the gums and lead to infection.

- **Certain illnesses.** Any conditions that affect your immune system or your ability to heal, including diabetes and arthritis, can put you at higher risk of periodontal disease.
- **Side effects to medication.** To have a healthy mouth, you need plenty of saliva to fight bacteria. However, many drugs, such as those for depression, heart disease, and other conditions, can cause a dry mouth, which can make you more prone to infection.

Here are some tips to prevent gum disease and dental problems:

- **Brush your teeth twice a day.** Cram cautions that while we all think we know how to brush our teeth, many of us don't. "It's not just how often you brush, but how thoroughly you do it," says Cram

What are the stages of gum disease?

- **Gingivitis** is the earliest stage of gum disease. At this stage, gums become red and inflamed and may bleed easily. Gingivitis can usually be turned around with a regimen of daily brushing and flossing, along with regular dental check-ups and cleanings -- but it does need to be caught early. "Gingivitis is reversible. Periodontitis usually has to have some sort of intervention," says Quinones.
- **Periodontitis** is a more serious stage of gum disease that can seriously damage the gums and structures that support the teeth. One of the hallmarks of periodontitis is pockets that form when gums pull away from the teeth. The bone and ligament that support the tooth start to break down and over time, the tooth becomes loose in its socket. Without treatment, the tooth could eventually have to be removed.

Besides what it does to the mouth, gum disease has been linked to conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and premature births or low birth weight. According to Sally Cram, DDS, PC, consumer advisor for the American Dental Association, emerging research pinpoints inflammation. "They're finding the role of inflammation in the body is very critical to a lot of these different diseases," Cram tells WebMD. "And that's essentially what gum disease is: infection and inflammation in the oral cavity."