DELTA DENTAL®

You and your gums

The story of gum disease



Your teeth aren't the only part of your mouth that needs attention. As the support system for your teeth, your gums are essential to a healthy smile. But nearly half of Americans over age 30 show signs of gum disease, a condition that can wreak havoc on your oral health. Don't let that happen to you — find out what you can do to understand and stop this all-too-common ailment.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is an infection of the tissues and bones supporting your teeth. In its early stage, the disease appears as gingivitis, an inflammation of the gums. When left untreated, it can develop into a more severe condition called periodontitis. At that point, some effects of the disease may not be reversible.

What causes it?

Bacteria in your mouth create plaque, a sticky substance that builds up on your teeth. Not only does plaque cause cavities, it also irritates the gums, making them pull away from your teeth. This leaves empty pockets between your teeth and gums: the perfect place for more bacteria to grow. Eventually, the disease can weaken your gums and jawbone to the point that your teeth may loosen and fall out.

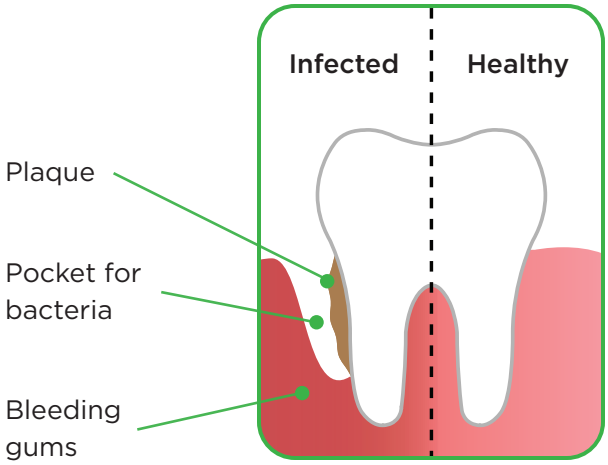
Am I at risk?

Certain factors can increase your chances of developing the disease:

- **Not brushing or flossing properly**. This lets plaque build up, gradually destroying your gums.
- **Age.** More than 60% of Americans over 65 have moderate to severe gum disease.[1]
- **Systemic disease.** Conditions like diabetes, heart disease and rheumatoid arthritis are linked to inflammation of the gums.
- **Tobacco.** All forms, including cigarettes and chewing tobacco, weaken the immune response in your mouth.
- **Medications.** Some drugs for heart disease and seizures can harm your gums.

[1] Oral Health in America: Advances and Challenges. National Institutes of Health. 2021.

The elements of gum disease



How can I tell if I have it?

Look for common signs of the disease:

- Gums that bleed when you brush or floss
- Red, sensitive gums
- Bad breath that doesn't go away
- Teeth that feel loose or look longer than they used to

How do I stop it?

- **Brush and floss regularly.** You need both a toothbrush and floss to remove bacteria from the surface of your teeth and the spaces between your teeth and gums.
- **Give your body the nutrients it needs.** Vitamin C (found in oranges, bell peppers and leafy green vegetables) and vitamin D (found in fish, soy and dairy) are essential to gum health.
- **Visit the dentist for regular cleanings and exams.** Your dentist can monitor the health of your gums and remove plaque that you've missed.
- **Know your risk factors.** Being aware of your risk factors can help you and your dentist create a battle plan to fight and stop the disease.

Want to know more?

Visit **deltadentalins.com/wellness** — a one-stop shop for oral health-related tools and tips.

Our Delta Dental enterprise includes these companies in these states: Delta Dental of California — CA, Delta Dental of the District of Columbia — DC, Delta Dental of Pennsylvania — PA & MD, Delta ainia, Inc. — WV, Delta Dental of Delaware, Inc. — DE, Delta Dental of New York, Inc. — NY, Delta Dental Insurance Company — AL, DC, FL, GA, LA, MS, MT, NV, TX and UT.

© 2026 Delta Dental. All rights reserved.
EF08 #1136050.01 (06/26)