

Winning the War Against GUM DISEASE

Page 1 of 5

There's a battle going on everyday in our mouths, and the stakes are high. If we win, healthy gums will anchor our teeth for a lifetime. However, losing could lead to serious problems. Since almost three-quarters of Americans have some form of [periodontal \(gum\) disease](#), it's clear that most of us could use some gum care reinforcements.

Public enemy number one in the war against gum disease is plaque, that sticky, yellowish film of bacteria that coats our teeth after meals. Thorough cleaning is the best weapon to defeat plaque. But if we don't clean our teeth well enough, plaque starts to gain the upper hand. It builds up between teeth and under the gumline and hardens into tartar. It releases harmful toxins that irritate our gum tissue, and these toxins make our gums painful and puffy.



▶ **Page 2:** Welcome to gingivitis, the first stage of gum disease

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Feature Article

Jump to ...

Welcome to **GINGIVITIS**, the First Stage of Gum Disease

Page 2 of 5

Left untreated, gingivitis leads to a more advanced form of gum disease called periodontitis. However, periodontitis sometimes attacks without any prior symptoms. During [periodontitis](#), the plaque toxins penetrate the gums and destroy the bone structure that supports our teeth. If we allow it, periodontitis can cause extensive root decay and (eventually) tooth loss.

The good news is that there are some gum disease warning signs, including:

- bad taste in mouth
- bad breath
- red, swollen, or tender gums
- gums that bleed
- gums that have pulled away from teeth
- loose teeth
- [sensitive teeth](#)
- pain when chewing
- pus between your teeth and gum
- a change in the way your teeth you bite

If any of these symptoms persist after a sustained cleaning routine, see your dental professional. In addition, other factors such as high sugar intake, tobacco use, jaw disorders, and diabetes may contribute to gum disease and should be monitored as much as possible.

► **Page 3:** Healthier Gums in Three Easy Steps



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Feature Article

Jump to ...



HEALTHIER GUMS

in Three Easy Steps

Page 3 of 5

Waiting for the warning signs to appear can mean giving gum disease a head start. By following a simple care plan, we can decrease our risk and keep the disease at bay. In most cases, gingivitis can be healed quickly by paying close attention to plaque removal. Try following these simple steps:

STEP 1

Brush and Floss Correctly:

Remember, proper brushing alone cannot clean our teeth thoroughly. Both brushing and flossing are essential to maintaining healthy gums.

STEP 2

Eat a Balanced Diet:

Certain foods contain vitamins and nutrients that our gums thrive on. Be sure to limit snacks between meals and avoid sugary treats.

STEP 3

Schedule Regular Check-ups:

Maybe the most important step in gum disease prevention. Early detection reduces the risk of permanent damage and can prevent more extensive treatment in later years.

CONTEMPORARY WEAPONS Against Gum Disease



Dental visits are also a good time to have your cleaning techniques evaluated. With the help of discoloring wafers, dental professionals can see where you've done a good job and where you need more work. These wafers use vegetable dye to highlight bacteria and show areas on your teeth and gumline that are not being cleaned properly. By applying the wafer to teeth surfaces and observing where the dye accumulates, dental professionals highlight areas that are at risk for plaque buildup. This helps alter poor cleaning tactics and fight plaque more efficiently. You can even use wafers to check yourself at home. Ask your dental professional for more information.

Dental professionals also have other weapons at their disposal in the struggle against gingivitis and periodontitis. Antibiotics inserted into the pockets surrounding teeth and bacteria-fighting mouth rinses both focus increased firepower on plaque. Periostat, a pill that suppresses the enzyme which breaks down the gums and bones that hold your teeth in place, is another option. Used daily with proper dental supervision, Periostat has stopped periodontal disease cold in some cases where tooth loss appeared unavoidable. None of these can replace daily brushing and flossing, but your dental professional may consider them to help slow down the disease's advance.

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Feature Article

Jump to ...

Fighting Gum Disease for a LIFETIME

Page 5 of 5



We cannot begin our war against periodontal disease too early. The sooner children learn the proper teeth cleaning methods, the better off they'll be. Toddlers can start to learn how to brush, as long as it's followed by brushing and gentle flossing until they are able to do it alone. Many teens have bleeding gums resulting from poor cleaning habits, so daily care is extra important—especially around braces. Adults should continue regular cleaning and check-ups to keep gingivitis at bay. For seniors, proper care can help prevent the exposed and decayed roots that come with receding gums.

Obviously, taking good care of your gums is a lifelong fight. Your best bet for defeating gum disease combines daily cleaning with dental supervision and advice. Start your routine today and protect the only foundation your mouth has.