

Bleeding Gums

Bleeding gums are a sign the gums are not healthy.

Bleeding from the gums during tooth brushing or flossing means the gums are inflamed. Inflamed means that the body is trying to fight an infection. When the human body fights an infection or tries to heal a wound more blood flows to the area, the area swells up and looks red. Like when you cut yourself or when you have an insect bite. (The photo shows red swollen gums.)

Bleeding gums are a sign of ACTIVE gum disease, both in the early and advanced stages of the disease.

99% of gum disease is caused by plaque on the teeth. Plaque is the sticky white stuff that forms on the teeth during the day. If you run your fingernail around the gum margin of your teeth you are likely to find it gathers behind your nails. Plaque is full of bugs, millions of bacteria are in the amount on your fingernail! (The photo shows a patient with an extreme amount of plaque on their teeth.)

Bleeding gums are treated by removing the plaque from the teeth effectively every day. This means brushing systematically for 3 minutes as well as using something to clean between the teeth (dental floss, tapes). The area that everybody finds difficult is the margin where the tooth joins the gum so extra attention should be paid here, and you should look in a mirror to make it easier. Many people stop cleaning their teeth because they are afraid of the blood. However, this causes more plaque, and is the beginning of a vicious circle.

Some people are very susceptible to gum disease so for these people even a small amount of plaque remaining on the teeth can cause a lot of damage. This is why your visits to see our hygienists, Jodi and Carol, are so important. They are highly skilled in assessing your needs and in teaching you how to clean effectively. It is their job to help you learn how to maintain your gum health throughout your life. Unfortunately cleaning your teeth effectively is not easy, even dentists and hygienists struggle in some areas!

Over recent years research into dental disease has discovered that people who suffer from gum disease are more likely to suffer from heart disease and diabetes. This is not surprising as all these 3 diseases are:

- caused by similar inflammatory processes in the body,
- linked with eating a diet rich in saturated fat and refined carbohydrate (sugar), and low in fruit and vegetables,
- made worse by stress.

The most recent research is indicating that in fact gum disease contributes to the development of heart disease and diabetes in some people.

We feel that healthy gums and healthy mouths are really important for good general health, so are trying to help our patients by

- encouraging you to come to the dentist/hygienist on a regular basis to check for any sign of problems
- teaching you to clean your teeth to the best standard
- teaching you about the right choices to make in your diet

We hope you have found this information useful and would value your opinion or any suggestions to improve this leaflet.

Key Points

- **Gums should not bleed when you brush or floss your teeth**
- **Bleeding gums are a sign of ACTIVE gum disease**
- **Gum disease is linked with heart disease and diabetes.**
- **Gum disease is treated by cleaning your teeth well every day**
- **Hygienists teach people how to clean their teeth well, as it is difficult.**
- **Healthy gums are important for good general health**