

What is Gingivitis?

Gingivitis is caused by the build-up of plaque – a naturally-occurring sticky film containing bacteria – on the teeth and gums. The bacteria found in plaque produce toxins that can irritate the gums and cause them to become red, inflamed, puffy, and may even lead to bleeding.

This harmful plaque bacteria can even lead to issues beyond gingivitis like weakened tooth enamel. Even with regular brushing, it's important to make sure you're taking care of your gum line, because a healthy mouth starts there

Other factors that may increase your risk of Gingivitis?

- Smoking/tobacco use
- Poor oral hygiene
- Not fully removing plaque
- Stress
- Hormonal changes
- Poor nutrition
- Medications
- Chronic diseases

Gingivitis Signs and Symptoms

Because gingivitis doesn't often cause pain, many people don't know they have it. That's why it's important not only to know what to look for, but also to see your dentist and hygienist regularly for cleanings and check-ups.

Here are some gingivitis symptoms to look out for:

- **Red, puffy gums.**
- **Bleeding gums**, especially when you brush or floss.
- **Sore gums** that won't go away.
- **Tooth pain or sensitivity.** When gums pull away from teeth, teeth are more exposed and sensitive to hot and cold foods or beverages.
- **Bad breath** that won't go away. Plaque contains millions of bacteria that produce foul-smelling waste products.
- **Loose teeth** or changes in the way your teeth fit when you bite down. This could be an advanced gum disease, called periodontitis.

Gingivitis Treatment and Prevention

With the help of your dentist and hygienist, gingivitis is treatable and preventable.

Treating and preventing gingivitis is all about eliminating as much plaque from your teeth and gums as possible. The best way to treat it is to catch it early. Make a dental appointment as soon as possible. Your hygienist will remove plaque or tartar (plaque that has hardened) from your teeth with special tools. Tartar can only be removed by a dental professional, so using oral care items rated for plaque removal helps reduce the amount of tartar needing removal during your dental visit.

Steps to help prevent and treat gingivitis:

- **Use an anti-gingivitis toothpaste:** Use a toothpaste which neutralizes plaque bacteria around the gum line and is clinically proven to give you healthier gums.
- **Use an anti-gingivitis mouthwash,** that neutralizes harmful plaque bacteria build-up and reduces bleeding gums.
- **Brush your teeth and gums for at least 2 minutes,** at least 2 times a day.
- **Floss at least once a day,** to clean easily between teeth and below the gum line to remove gingivitis-causing plaque.
- **Replace your toothbrush every 3 months:** Worn-out bristles remove less plaque.
- **If you have sore gums after flossing or brushing, or notice bleeding, don't stop brushing or flossing.** Use a toothbrush with soft bristles so you don't hurt your gums.
- **Check your gums in the mirror often** for changes in colour or texture. If their appearance changes, see your dentist and hygienist.
- Cut back on foods that are high in sugar. Sugar promotes the growth of gingivitis-causing plaque.



Complications

Untreated gum disease that develops into periodontitis, it can lead to further complications. These include: gum abscesses, receding gums, loose teeth or loss of teeth.