

Gingivitis

Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums.



Causes

[Gingivitis](#) is [inflammation](#) and [infection](#) that destroys the tissues that support the [teeth](#).

[Gingivitis](#) is due to the long-term effects of [plaque](#) deposits on your [teeth](#).

Plaque is a sticky material made of [bacteria](#), [mucus](#), and food debris that builds up on the exposed parts of the teeth.

If you do not remove [plaque](#), it turns into a hard deposit called [tartar](#) (or calculus) that becomes trapped at the base of the [tooth](#).

Plaque and tartar irritate and inflame the gums. [Bacteria](#) and the [toxins](#) they produce cause the gums to become infected, swollen, and tender.

The following raise your risk for [gingivitis](#):

- Certain infections and body-wide (systemic) diseases
- Poor [dental hygiene](#)
- [Pregnancy](#) ([hormonal](#) changes increase the sensitivity of the gums)
- Uncontrolled diabetes
- [Misaligned teeth](#), rough edges of fillings, and ill-fitting or unclean mouth appliances (such as braces, dentures, bridges, and crowns)
- Use of certain medications, including [phenytoin](#), bismuth, and some birth control pills

Symptoms

- [Bleeding gums](#) ([blood](#) on toothbrush even with gentle brushing of the [teeth](#))
- Bright red or red-purple appearance to gums
- Gums that are tender when touched, but otherwise painless
- [Mouth sores](#)
- [Swollen gums](#)
- Shiny appearance to gums

Exams and Tests

The dentist will examine your mouth and [teeth](#) and look for soft, swollen, red-purple gums.

The gums are most often painless or mildly tender.

[Plaque](#) and [tartar](#) may be seen at the base of the [teeth](#).

The dentist will use a probe to closely examine your gums in order to determine if you have [gingivitis](#) or [periodontitis](#).

[Dental x-rays](#) may be done to see if the disease has spread to the supporting structures of the [teeth](#).

Treatment

Your GP could give temporary relief for the pain, inflammation and infection of your gums with analgesics and antibiotics.

The dentist or dental hygienist will clean your [teeth](#). They may use different tools to loosen and remove deposits from the teeth.

Your dentist may recommend:

- Having professional [teeth](#) cleaning in addition to brushing and flossing twice a year, or more often for worse cases of [gum](#) disease.
- Using antibacterial mouth rinses or other aids
- Getting misaligned [teeth](#) repaired
- Replacing dental and orthodontic appliances

Any other related illnesses or conditions should be treated.

Warm salt water or antibacterial rinses can reduce [gum](#) swelling. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicines may also be helpful.

You must maintain good oral care throughout your life or [gum](#) disease will return.

Possible Complications

- [Gingivitis](#) returns
- [Periodontitis](#)
- [Infection](#) or [abscess](#) of the gums or the jaw bones
- [Trench mouth](#)

Prevention

Good oral hygiene is the best way to prevent [gingivitis](#).

You should brush your [teeth](#) at least twice a day. You should floss at least once a day.

Your dentist may recommend brushing and flossing after every meal and at bedtime. Ask your dentist or dental hygienist to show you how to properly brush and floss your [teeth](#).

Your dentist may suggest devices to help remove [plaque](#) deposits. These include special toothpicks, toothbrushes, water irrigation, or other devices. You still must brush and floss your [teeth](#) regularly.

Antiplaque or antitartar toothpastes or mouth rinses may also be recommended.

Many dentists recommend having [teeth](#) professionally cleaned at least every 6 months. Some [plaque](#) can be missed, even with careful brushing and flossing at home.