

THE CHATTER

Oral Health Advice from Delta Dental of Arkansas

September is National Gum Care Month

Let's Get Real About Gum Disease

Periodontal disease, or gum disease, is caused when bacteria in plaque builds up between the gums and teeth. As the bacteria grow on the affected tooth, the surrounding gums can become inflamed. Since the symptoms are often mild, many people don't know they have this serious disease. If left untreated, gum disease can lead to tooth loss.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF GUM DISEASE.



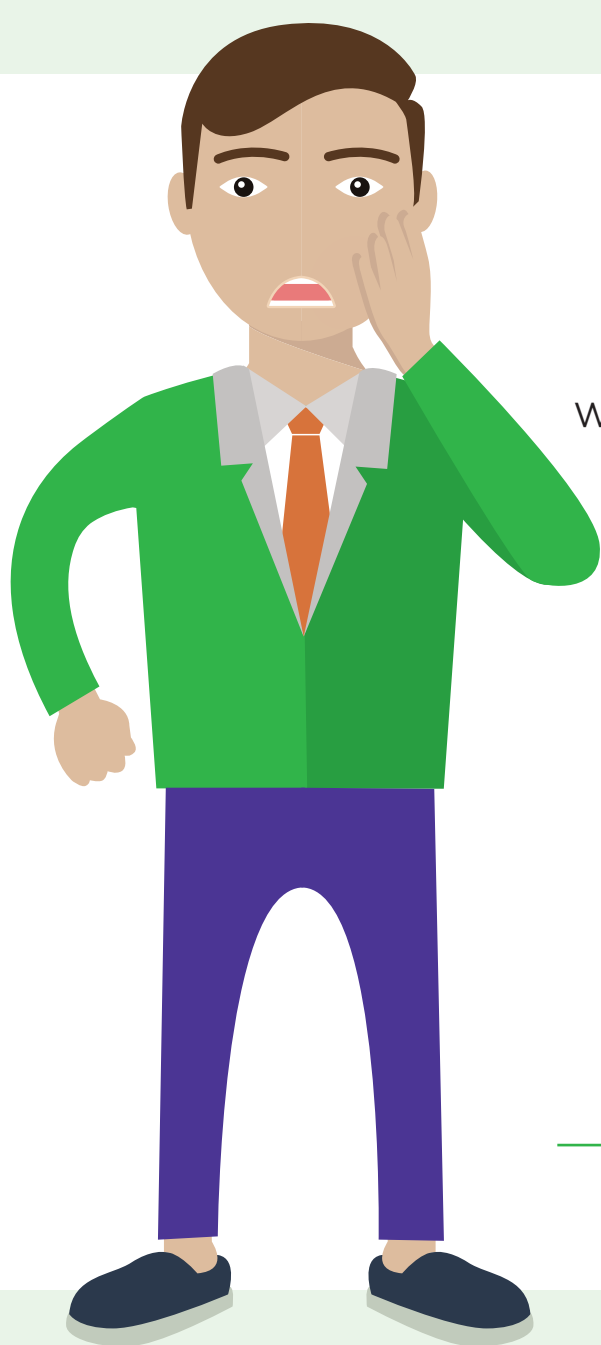
GINGIVITIS

The longer plaque and tartar are on teeth, the more harmful they become. The bacteria cause inflammation of the gums that is called "gingivitis." In gingivitis, the gums become red, swollen and can bleed easily. Gingivitis is a mild form of gum disease that can usually be reversed with daily brushing and flossing, and regular professional cleaning. This form of gum disease does not include any loss of bone and tissue that hold teeth in place.



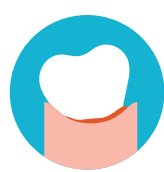
PERIODONTITIS

When gingivitis is not treated, it can advance to periodontitis. With periodontitis, gums pull away from the teeth and form pockets that are infected. The body's immune system fights the bacteria as the plaque spreads and grows below the gum line. Bacterial toxins and the body's enzymes fighting the infection actually start to break down the bone and connective tissue that hold teeth in place. If not treated, the bones, gums and connective tissue that support the teeth are destroyed. The teeth may eventually become loose and have to be removed.



Symptoms of Gum Disease

Warning signs of gum disease include the following:



Loose teeth



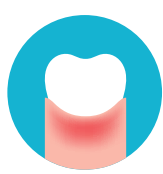
Bad breath that won't go away



Tender or bleeding gums



Sensitive teeth



Red or swollen gums



Painful chewing

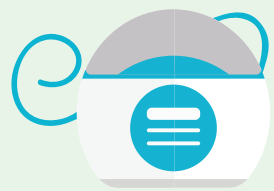
Gum disease symptoms may not appear until an advanced stage of the disease.

Preventing Gum Disease



Brush your teeth.

Brushing after meals helps remove food debris and plaque trapped between your teeth and gums. Don't forget to include your tongue, where bacteria love to hide.



Floss daily.

Flossing for 2-3 minutes at least once a day helps remove food particles and plaque between teeth that a toothbrush can't quite reach.



Know the risk factors.

Age, smoking, diet and genetics can all increase your risk for gum disease. If you find that you are at increased risk, talk with your dentist.



Get regular teeth cleanings & dental exams.

Regular cleanings remove plaque and hard deposits called calculus, to which plaque attaches, from teeth along the gum line, and exams can help detect any problems at an early stage.

Want to know your risk for gum disease?

Take a short quiz to find out more.

TAKE QUIZ