

GINGIVITIS

Almost everyone knows what a cavity is. Because of the far-reaching effects of advertising by toothpaste and oral rinse manufacturers, by 2004 almost everyone has heard of **gingivitis**. What may not be quite clear to you, however, is exactly what gingivitis is. You may recognize it as a problem but not know why and how serious it might be. You may even know that it is a type of gum (periodontal) disease. You may also know that it is somehow related to plaque and tartar (calculus) on teeth. But why should you be concerned about having it?

Gingivitis is an infection of the gum tissues surrounding the teeth. It is a very common infection and affects almost 95% of the world's population. This infection can be characterized by redness, swelling and bleeding of the gums around the teeth. This gum infection absolutely needs to be treated as soon as possible. Gum infections are almost always preventable with sound daily oral self-care.

Gingivitis is the mildest form of periodontal disease and is reversible. By definition, there is no loss of bone that supports the tooth. If treated early, gingivitis can be eliminated. If left untreated, it can progress into the more serious form of periodontal disease called *periodontitis*. In its more serious form, the bone and gum tissues can be permanently affected. Bleeding gums, one of the signs of gingivitis, are a sign of infection in the mouth. Your gum tissues should never bleed. It is not normal for blood to appear on your toothbrush when you have finished brushing. Gingivitis does not generally hurt, so you may not even know that you have it. It can be localized (around a few teeth) or generalized (around most or all of the teeth). Gingivitis is seen most often in patients who do not brush and floss well daily, but it can also be related to medication. Bad breath can be another sign of gingivitis. If you are using a mouthwash to get rid of bad breath, you may need dental attention. While bad breath can be related to some medical problems, most often it is just debris that is not cleaned properly from your teeth, gums and tongue that is decomposing in the dark, warm and moist environment of your mouth – a perfect place to breed germs.

If you have bleeding gums, you should be concerned. Healthy tissue anywhere in our bodies does not bleed. So what can you do to stop the bleeding?

We can help you eliminate the gingivitis. It involves a good professional cleaning and good oral self-care habits. Plaque (soft debris made up of bacteria) and tartar (calculus or hardened debris) must be removed before the gum tissues can heal and the infection can be eliminated. If it has been some time since you had your teeth cleaned properly, it may take more than one appointment to get you back into shape.

Get your teeth and gums cleaned on a regular basis. Keep them clean with daily brushing and flossing. The infection you have will be eliminated. If you keep your teeth and gums clean, they can be healthy and trouble-free for your whole life.

If you have any questions about gingivitis, please feel free to ask us.