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WHAT IS GUM DISEASE?

Gums are made of soft tissue. They surround the bottom portion of your teeth (called the **tooth root**). Taking care of your gums is just as important as taking care of your teeth.

Gum disease is an infection of the gums. It is caused by **plaque**, a sticky film that collects on teeth and gums. Plaque makes acids and toxins that can make gums red, puffy, or bleed.

Over time, gum disease can cause gums to pull away from the teeth. This can form pockets between the teeth and gums. Germs can become trapped in these **pockets**, causing the **bone** around the teeth to become weak.

Gum disease is common. Many people have an early form of gum disease, which can be treated with good oral care. But if you ignore gum disease, it can weaken the bone around the teeth, causing teeth to become loose and eventually fall out.

Pockets
Can form between the teeth and gums over time as a result of gum disease.

Gum disease
Infection of the gums caused by plaque – gums can look red and puffy.
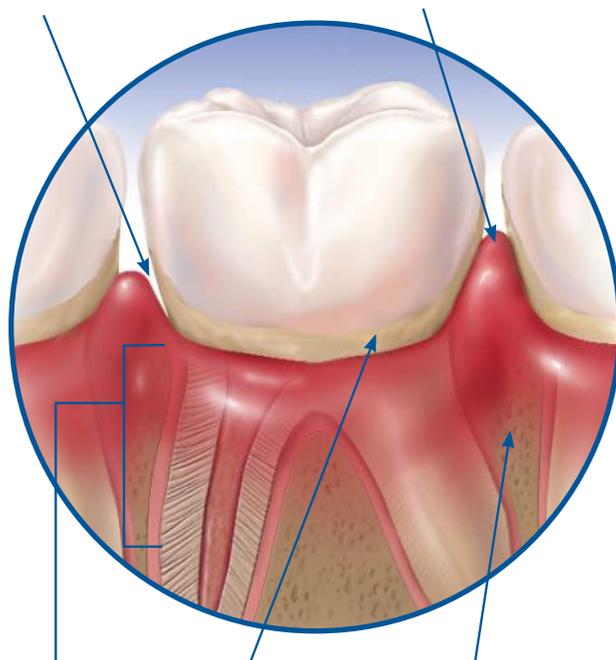
Tooth root
The part of the tooth below the gumline

Plaque
A sticky film that can cause gum disease

Bone
Specifically, the bone beneath your teeth and gums

WHAT IS GUM DISEASE?

Many people don't know they have gum disease. This is why it is important to see your dental team regularly for cleanings and checkups.

Here are some signs of gum disease:

- **Gums that are red or puffy or bleed when you brush or floss**

    These are early forms of gum disease, called **gingivitis**. They can usually be treated with good oral care.

- **Tooth pain or sensitivity**

    Gums that have pulled away from the teeth can make teeth sensitive to hot or cold foods or drinks.

- **Persistent bad breath**

- **Adult teeth that are loose or develop gaps; changes in the way your teeth fit when you bite down**

    This is the most serious form of gum disease, called **periodontitis.**

Quick facts about gum disease

- Gum disease is an infection that can affect gums and the surrounding bone.

- Gum disease starts when germs in plaque cause gums to become red and puffy, and sometimes bleed.

- You can help prevent gum disease by brushing and flossing twice a day.

- Many people don't know they have gum disease. That's why it's important to see your dental team regularly.

Here are some tips to help prevent gum disease:

- **Brush teeth and gums. Floss between teeth.**

    Pay special attention to your back teeth. They are likely to have more plaque on them because they are hard to reach.

- **Change your toothbrush every 3 months.**

    Bristles that are worn remove less plaque.

- **If your gums bleed, don't stop brushing and flossing.**

    Use a toothbrush with soft bristles so you don't hurt your gums. See your dental team if the bleeding continues.

- **Visit your dental team regularly for teeth cleanings and checkups.**

    Tell your dental team if you are pregnant or have diabetes. These conditions make it harder for the body to fight gum disease.

- **Check your gums in the mirror often.**

    Look for changes in color or texture. If you think you have gum disease, see your dental team.

For more tips on how to prevent gum disease, talk to your dental team or visit oralb.com.