

## Gingivitis

Gingivitis is the first stage of gum disease. It is an inflammation of the gums as a result of the presence of plaque and bacteria. Gingivitis is reversible!

However, if no action is taken, the plaque can calcify and harden and turn into calculus. If left, the bacteria in the calculus can slowly erode the supporting structure of the teeth. This is then the final stage of gum disease (chronic periodontitis), which is the major cause of tooth loss in adults.

### How do I know if I have gingivitis?

If you have gingivitis your gums will be slightly inflamed and have a dark pink/red appearance. As opposed to healthy gums, which are pale pink, and have a stippled appearance. You might not be able to tell the difference, but your dentist will. At every check-up that you attend at our practice, the health of your gums is recorded.

Your gums might bleed when brushing or cleaning in between the teeth. This is a classic sign of gingivitis.

Your body sends blood to the area in order to fight the bacteria, this makes them inflamed and red. And so pressure on the area causes it to bleed.

If you smoke, you are not likely to have this symptom, as smoking reduces the blood flow to the gums.

In rare cases, patients will suffer with sore, sensitive or ulcerated gums which is a sign of advanced gingivitis. This is called acute gingivitis and can be very painful.

### What causes gingivitis?

Gingivitis is caused by plaque on and surrounding our teeth. Plaque builds up on our teeth every day.

During the day, bacteria in the mouth feed on the food which we eat. This bacteria multiplies and becomes visible as plaque. If this plaque is left here, the gums begin to become irritated by the bacteria. This results in the gums become inflamed and may cause them to bleed.

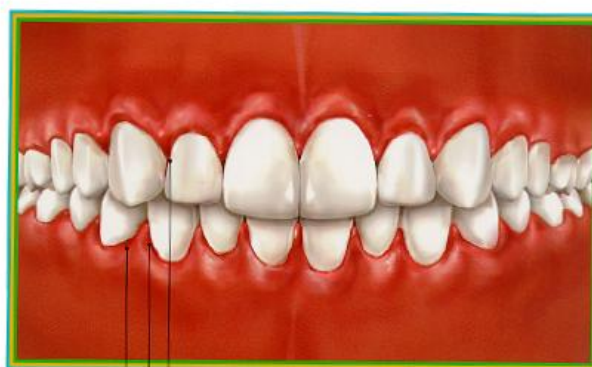
Certain patients may be more prone to gum disease than others. Pregnancy, genetics, certain illnesses, and medications can mean that you are more likely to suffer with gingivitis.

### What can I do to reverse my gingivitis?

You can reverse gingivitis by keeping your mouth clean and healthy. This means brushing at least 2 times a day with fluoride toothpaste, for 2 minutes at a time. Brushing is most important at night, as saliva flow is reduced when you are asleep- providing a perfect breeding ground for bacteria!

We also advise the use of Peroxyl or Corsodyl Daily mouthwashes, as they target the bacteria which cause gum disease. We would suggest you use a mouth rinse at a separate

## GINGIVITIS



### GUMS:

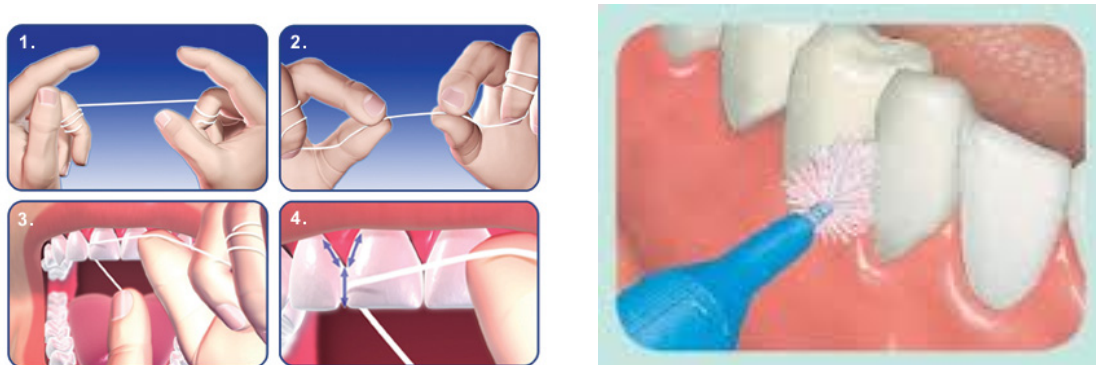
- Red
- Swollen
- Bleed easily



time to brushing, otherwise the fluoride you have just used to clean your teeth, is washed away.

You should also clean in between your teeth. You may brush your teeth perfectly, but you still cannot reach in between them; where the bacteria hide.

You can do this with floss, tape, or interdental brushes. Some patients can find use of these difficult to begin with. If you are one of these, ask your dentist to demonstrate the correct technique. It is easier than you think!



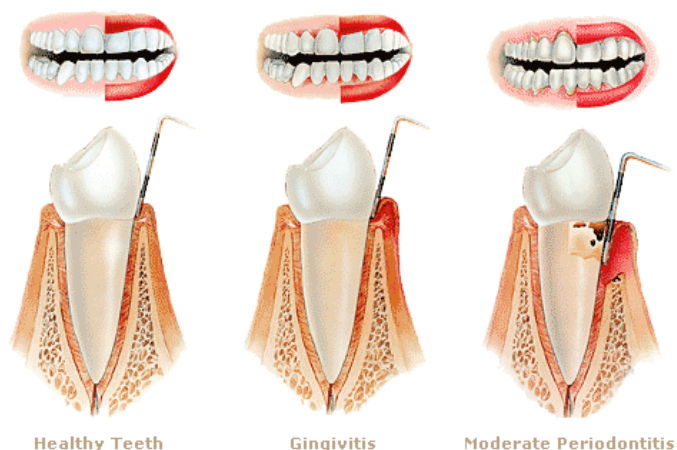
Your gums may bleed or be a little bit sore for the first few days of interdental cleaning. The fact the gums are bleeding means you are reaching the areas where the bacteria is present, therefore cleaning the area. So do persevere with the cleaning, and gradually the bleeding will stop, resulting in healthy gums.

Also, visit your dentist or hygienist for regular cleans so they can remove the bits you may have missed, and monitor your progress. Your dentist or hygienist will be able to tell you how often you should be attending in order to prevent and control further gum disease.

### What happens if my gingivitis is not treated?

Gingivitis is only the first stage of gum disease and is completely reversible if you clean your teeth well and visit your dentist or hygienist as often as they recommend.

However, if gingivitis goes untreated it can progress to periodontitis. This then affects the tissues and bone which support the teeth.



The gum which surrounds the tooth is usually tight if healthy.

However with periodontitis, it becomes loose, which allows plaque, food and bacteria to work its way down the side of the tooth to the root. In the long term this can cause gum recession, tooth decay, abscesses, chronic periodontitis and mobile teeth.

As gingivitis progresses to periodontitis, it becomes much harder to treat and control, as periodontitis is irreversible.