How to Keep Your Gums Healthy: Daily Care | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/how-to-keep-your-gums-healthy/

Details:

You keep your gums healthy by removing plaque from the gumline every day and seeing your dentist and hygienist regularly. Brush at least twice a day for two minutes with a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste, and clean between your teeth once a day with floss or interdental brushes. At Core Dental we also look for factors that attract plaque, such as faulty fillings, and we remove built-up tartar during a professional clean. Healthy gums support your teeth and your general wellbeing.

Why is it important to keep your gums healthy?

Healthy gums and the bone beneath them hold your teeth in place. When gum disease is left unmanaged it can lead to loose teeth and, eventually, tooth loss. Research also links gum health with general health, so looking after your gums is part of looking after your whole body. At Core Dental we talk with our patients about gum health at check-ups, because early gum problems are often painless and easy to miss.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease, also called periodontal disease, affects the structures that support your teeth, namely the gums, the bone and other tissues. It starts when bacteria build up along the gumline as part of plaque. The bacteria release substances that trigger an inflammatory response in the gums and the bone around the tooth.

Plaque that stays on the teeth for a long time can harden into calculus, also called tartar, which bonds firmly to the tooth surface. Tartar holds plaque against the gums more easily, which raises the risk of further inflammation.

What does gingivitis look like, and can it progress?

Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums. Inflamed gums tend to look red and swollen, feel tender and bleed more easily, and you may notice this when you brush or floss. In many cases gingivitis is only the early sign of a disease that can progress quietly.

If gingivitis is left unmanaged it can develop into periodontitis, which involves loss of the bone that supports the teeth. Pockets can form around the teeth, the gums can shrink, and the teeth may become loose and mobile. Over time, affected teeth may be lost. Bone loss from chronic periodontitis is generally considered irreversible and builds up over time, which is why gum disease becomes more common with age. If you notice bleeding gums, please let us know so your dentist can examine them.

How can gum disease affect your overall health?

Gum disease is associated with other conditions in the body, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The relationship is described as two-way, meaning each condition can make the other harder

to manage, and improving one may help the other.

One explanation is that inflammation in the gums and supporting tissues releases inflammatory markers into the bloodstream. These may contribute to changes in blood vessels and may affect how the body regulates blood sugar, which can make diabetes harder to control. If you have diabetes or a heart condition, tell your dentist so that we can take it into account when planning your care.

How often and for how long should you brush?

Brush at least twice a day for two minutes each time. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste, and brush in gentle circular motions. Take particular care along the area where your teeth meet your gums, because plaque collects there.

Brushing too hard does not clean better and can irritate your gums, so a light touch is enough. Replace your toothbrush when the bristles look worn. If you are unsure whether your technique is working, our team can show you what to do at your next visit.

How should you floss to protect your gums?

Clean between your teeth once a day, as a toothbrush cannot reach all of the surfaces where plaque builds up. To floss:

Hold the floss firmly between your thumbs and forefingers.

Gently work it between two teeth using a gentle sawing motion.

Curve it around the side of each tooth and slide it just below the gumline.

Take care not to snap the floss down, because flossing too aggressively can damage your gums.

Interdental brushes, such as Piksters, are an alternative for cleaning larger gaps between teeth. Your dentist or hygienist can recommend the size that suits your teeth.

Why do regular check-ups and cleans matter for your gums?

A good home routine removes plaque, which reduces the bacteria and the inflammatory response that lead to gum disease. Professional care adds to this in two ways.

Check-ups. At a check-up your dentist looks for factors that may attract plaque, such as faulty fillings or cavities, and for other issues that can raise the risk of gum disease.

Cleans. A professional clean removes tartar along the gumline that you cannot remove at home. This lets your gums heal and makes it easier to keep them healthy between visits.

How often you need to visit depends on your individual oral health risks, so your dentist will advise a schedule for you rather than assuming everyone needs the same interval. It is never too late to start looking after your gums.

What should you do before your appointment?

When you book, tell us about any concerns, such as bleeding, swelling, bad breath or tender gums, and when you first noticed them. Bring relevant medical information and a list of your current medicines. Your dentist can then assess your teeth, gums and bite, take imaging if it is clinically appropriate, and explain which options suit you.

Ask what the recommended approach is meant to achieve, what alternatives exist, what aftercare involves and what risks or limitations apply. A written treatment plan helps you compare stages, appointments and payment arrangements before you decide to go ahead.

Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, a serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms. For severe pain or swelling without these signs, contact your Core Dental clinic promptly.

Bleeding gums: keep brushing, and count four weeks

There is one piece of published advice on gums that contradicts what instinct suggests, and one that gives you a deadline instead of a vague "see someone if it persists". Both come from the same paragraph.

The Victorian Department of Health: "Do not stop brushing if your gums are red, bleeding or puffy. Try to keep brushing with a soft toothbrush, as this will get rid of the bacteria and plaque that are causing the problem. The gums should soon start to look and feel better. If your gums do not improve or if they keep bleeding after four weeks, see your oral health professional."

Keep brushing. Bleeding feels like a signal to back off, and backing off leaves the plaque that caused it. Soft toothbrush, keep going.

Four weeks is the number. Not "if it continues". Four weeks of brushing well, and if the bleeding has not settled, that is the point to have it looked at. A timeframe is far more useful than an instruction to monitor, because it tells you when to stop monitoring.

And the reason there is time to spare at the early stage: "The good news is that gingivitis can be reversed." Early gum disease "affects the surface layers of the gum, particularly where the gum meets the tooth. At this stage, there is no damage to the deeper parts of the gums, teeth or bone."

No damage yet to bone — that is what makes gingivitis a window rather than a diagnosis to manage.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Gum disease, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025). Accessed 6 November 2026.

What is actually being lost, and the signs it has started

The reason gum disease is worth taking seriously is not the gums. It is what the gums are protecting, and the published description of that structure makes the stakes clear.

The anatomy, in the Department's own words. "The job of the gum is to provide a protective covering for the bone that holds your teeth in place. The periodontium is the name given to the group of gum and bone structures that surround and support the teeth, keeping them in place. The gum protects the periodontium by forming a seal that runs around the neck of the tooth."

A seal around the neck of each tooth. When it fails: "When the seal of the gum is damaged by gum disease, spaces can form between the tooth root and the gum. These spaces are called 'periodontal pockets'. Bacteria get trapped in these pockets and cause even more damage to the periodontium. Over time, bone is damaged and lost, and larger spaces or pockets begin to form between the tooth and the gum."

The structures at risk are named: "the covering of the tooth root (cementum), the bone and the fibres that connect the tooth root to the bone (periodontal ligament)". And the end point: "If periodontitis is not treated, the structures that hold the tooth firmly into the gum can become so damaged that teeth become loose and painful and may need to be removed."

The signs of the advanced stage , which are broader than bleeding: "bleeding gums"; "red/swollen gums"; "receding gums (the gum line shrinks away from the tooth making teeth look longer)"; "bad breath"; "a bad taste in the mouth"; "tenderness when biting"; "loose teeth, or teeth that have moved".

Teeth looking longer, a persistent bad taste, and tenderness when biting are the three most often put down to something else.

Why early treatment is the whole argument. A practitioner "can also professionally remove plaque and hardened plaque (calculus). This helps the gums to attach back to the tooth. Early treatment of periodontitis can save affected teeth."

Two things people with dentures or a dry mouth should know. The Department asks denture wearers to "clean dentures every day", because "plaque can easily build up on dentures, increasing the risk of gum disease around your natural teeth" — the risk is to the teeth that remain, not to the denture. And on dryness, its dry mouth page notes that a reduced saliva flow brings "a high rate of tooth decay" and decay "along the gum line (tooth root surface)", which is the same territory gum disease occupies.

The prevention list, verbatim and complete. "Brush your teeth and along the gum line twice a day - in the morning and before going to bed." "Use a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles, and a fluoride toothpaste from the age of 18 months." "Clean between teeth daily with dental floss, interdental brushes, or another tool recommended by an oral health professional." "Clean dentures every day." Plus "quitting smoking"; for people with diabetes, "keeping blood sugar levels well-controlled will help to reduce the risk of gum disease"; "avoiding sugary foods and drinks, especially between meals"; and "drinking plenty of tap water".

Note that cleaning between teeth is daily, and that the Department leaves the choice of tool to a clinician rather than prescribing floss for everyone.

On the general health connection, stated as the Department states it. "If gum disease is not under control it can impact your health and have negative effects on heart health, and worsen diabetes. Keeping your gums clean and healthy, helps keep your heart and other systems healthy too." That is the full extent of the published claim, and it is worth not stretching: it says uncontrolled gum disease can affect heart health and worsen diabetes, not that treating gums treats either condition.

And when to go in. "See your oral health professional if you have swollen or bleeding gums, or you are worried about anything to do with your mouth. Getting treatment early can help save teeth affected by gum disease." On frequency, the Department does not set a universal interval: "Ask your oral health professional how often you should visit for a check-up."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Gum disease, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025); Dry mouth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 9 September 2025). Both accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Is bleeding when I brush normal?

Bleeding gums are not something to ignore. They are often a sign of gum inflammation caused by plaque along the gumline. Keep brushing gently and cleaning between your teeth, and book an examination so your dentist can check your gums and advise on treatment.

Can gingivitis be reversed?

Gingivitis is the early stage of gum disease and is generally considered reversible with thorough daily cleaning and professional care. Periodontitis involves bone loss, which is not reversible, so early attention matters. Your dentist can tell you which stage applies to you.

Do I still need a professional clean if I brush and floss every day?

Yes, usually. Even with a good routine, tartar can form along the gumline, and only a professional clean can remove it. Your dentist or hygienist will recommend how often you should visit based on your gum health and risk factors.

Does gum disease only affect older people?

No. Gum disease can affect adults of different ages, although bone loss builds up over time and becomes more common as people get older. Starting good habits early, and having regular check-ups, helps protect your gums at any age.

Can a dentist help if I have diabetes or a heart condition?

Yes. Gum disease and these conditions can affect each other, so please tell us about your health history. Our dentists and hygienists can plan your care with that in mind and, where needed, can refer you to a registered periodontist.

Should I stop brushing if my gums bleed?

No — the opposite. The Victorian Department of Health: "Do not stop brushing if your gums are red, bleeding or puffy. Try to keep brushing with a soft toothbrush, as this will get rid of the bacteria and plaque that are causing the problem. The gums should soon start to look and feel better."

How long should I give it before seeing someone?

Four weeks. "If your gums do not improve or if they keep bleeding after four weeks, see your oral health professional." That is a deadline rather than a judgement call, which makes it easier to act on.

What are periodontal pockets?

Spaces that open up when the gum's seal around a tooth fails. "When the seal of the gum is damaged by gum disease, spaces can form between the tooth root and the gum. These spaces are called 'periodontal pockets'. Bacteria get trapped in these pockets and cause even more damage to the periodontium. Over time, bone is damaged and lost, and larger spaces or pockets begin to form between the tooth and the gum."

Why do my teeth look longer than they used to?

That is on the Department's list of signs of advanced gum disease: "receding gums (the gum line shrinks away from the tooth making teeth look longer)". Others on the same list are bleeding gums, red or swollen gums, bad breath, "a bad taste in the mouth", "tenderness when biting", and "loose teeth, or teeth that have moved".

Is it too late once it has gone past gingivitis?

Not necessarily, and the Department's wording is worth quoting exactly: "Early treatment of periodontitis can save affected teeth." A practitioner can "professionally remove plaque and hardened plaque (calculus)", which "helps the gums to attach back to the tooth".

How often should I clean between my teeth?

Daily. "Clean between teeth daily with dental floss, interdental brushes, or another tool recommended by an oral health professional." The Department leaves the choice of tool to a clinician rather than prescribing one.

I wear dentures — do I still need to worry about gum disease?

Yes, and the risk is to your remaining natural teeth. "Clean dentures every day. Plaque can easily build up on dentures, increasing the risk of gum disease around your natural teeth."

Does gum disease affect the rest of my health?

The Department's statement is this, and we will not stretch it: "If gum disease is not under control it can impact your health and have negative effects on heart health, and worsen diabetes. Keeping your gums clean and healthy, helps keep your heart and other systems healthy too." It says uncontrolled gum disease can affect those conditions — not that gum treatment treats them.

I have diabetes. What makes the most difference?

Blood sugar control is what the Department singles out: "For people with diabetes, keeping blood sugar levels well-controlled will help to reduce the risk of gum disease." Poorly managed diabetes is listed as a risk factor for gum disease alongside smoking.

How often should I have my gums checked?

The Department does not give a single interval: "Ask your oral health professional how often you should visit for a check-up." It is clearer about the trigger for going in sooner: "See your oral health professional if you have swollen or bleeding gums, or you are worried about anything to do with your mouth."

Related services and further reading

Dental hygiene

Dental check-ups

Periodontics

What does treatment of gum disease involve?

Why do people suffer from gum disease?

What does a hygiene appointment involve?

Why clean between the teeth

5 tips for a healthier smile

How can we help?

If your gums bleed, feel tender or look swollen, or it has been a while since your last clean, our team of dentists, hygienists and registered specialists can examine your gums and explain your options at any of our nine practices. You can read more about dental check-ups or call 13 13 16 to book.

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

HICAPS on-site claiming, and bulk billing for eligible children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What is periodontal disease?

Gum disease, or periodontal disease, affects the gums, bone and other tissues that support the teeth. It begins when bacteria in plaque build up along the gumline and trigger inflammation. Core Dental dentists can examine your gums and explain whether you have early or more advanced disease.

What causes gum disease?

Gum disease is caused by bacteria in plaque that collects at the gumline and triggers inflammation. Plaque that is not removed can harden into tartar, which holds more plaque against the gums. Faulty fillings and other factors can also make plaque harder to remove.

What are the early signs of gum problems?

Early signs include gums that look red or swollen, feel tender and bleed when you brush or floss. These changes can be mild and painless, so Core Dental recommends regular examinations so our dentists can spot gum inflammation early.

How long should I brush my teeth each day?

Brush at least twice a day for two minutes each time, using a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. At Core Dental our dental team can show you how to clean along the gumline, where plaque tends to collect.

Is there a link between gum disease and diabetes?

Gum disease is associated with diabetes, and each condition can make the other harder to manage. If you have diabetes, tell your Core Dental dentist so that we can take it into account when planning your gum care.

How do I clean between my teeth if I find floss difficult?

Interdental brushes are an alternative to floss, especially for larger gaps between teeth. Our Core Dental dentists and hygienists can recommend a suitable size and show you how to use them without damaging the gums.

How can I book a gum health appointment at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. We are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings at nine clinics across Melbourne. Mention any bleeding or tenderness so our team can plan your visit.

Can Core Dental treat advanced gum disease?

Our general dentists and hygienists manage many gum conditions, and our team includes registered specialists such as periodontists at some clinics. Your dentist will examine you, explain the options and refer you where appropriate.