



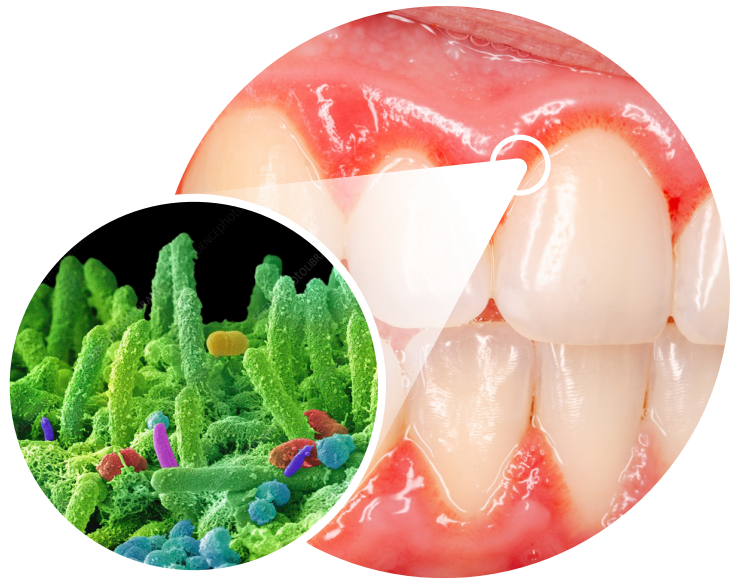
Gingivitis: A Red Flag You Can't Ignore



It's estimated that 7 in 10 Canadians will experience gingivitis, a form of gum disease, in their lifetime.

What is gingivitis?

Gingivitis is a mild infection caused by harmful bacteria in dental plaque, which accumulates at and below the gumline where your teeth and gums meet. When you don't brush your teeth regularly, these bacteria grow and your gums, or gingiva, become inflamed. Your teeth may even feel a bit "furry" when you run your tongue over them. Because gingivitis is often not painful, it can remain undetected until you see your dental hygienist. Your dental hygienist is there to help you take care of your gums so that they remain firm and pink and form a tight collar around each tooth.



What are the signs of gingivitis?

1 Red and puffy or swollen gums

2 Tender gums when chewing

3 Bleeding gums when brushing or cleaning between the teeth

4 Bad breath



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What other factors contribute to gingivitis?

Although gingivitis is caused by bacteria in the mouth, other factors can increase its severity or raise the risk of infection in the first place.

Hormonal changes: Puberty, monthly menstruation, and pregnancy increase blood flow to the gums, making them more sensitive to bacteria. Women in menopause may experience dry mouth, a decrease in saliva production, which allows bacteria to thrive.

Chronic diseases and stress: Conditions that weaken the immune system, such as cancer, diabetes, leukemia, HIV, and constant stress, can impair the body's ability to fight infection.

Poor nutrition: A body deprived of important nutrients is also less able to fight infection.

Medications: Anti-epilepsy and heart medications can cause the gums to become enlarged, making it easier for bacteria to become trapped and inflame the gums.

Smoking/tobacco/vaping use: Smoking is one of the greatest risk factors for gum disease. Because the mouth is drier, plaque builds up quickly on the teeth. Lower levels of oxygen in the bloodstream also prevent gums from healing properly once infected.

Why should I be concerned about gingivitis?

Gingivitis is not destructive but, if left untreated, it can lead to periodontitis, which is a more serious form of gum disease. Periodontitis destroys bone and gums, resulting in the eventual loss of teeth. Periodontitis also causes blood sugar to rise, making it harder to control diabetes.

What can I do to prevent or treat gingivitis?

Good oral hygiene practices are key to preventing or treating gingivitis.

- **Brush** two times a day, for two minutes each time, with a soft-bristled toothbrush. Make sure to brush along the gumline.
- Clean between your teeth with **floss**, an interdental brush or a water flosser every day.
- Use an antibacterial mouth rinse for 30 to 60 seconds daily.
- Eat a healthy diet consisting of proteins, fruits, and vegetables.
- Quit smoking, using tobacco, and vaping.
- Schedule regular appointments with your dental hygienist.

At your next appointment, ask your dental hygienist if you have gingivitis. Working together, you can protect your gums and keep them healthy for a lifetime.

Learn more about oral health at dentalhygienecanada.ca

For toothbrushing tips, visit dentalhygienecanada.ca/brushing

For flossing tips, visit dentalhygienecanada.ca/flossing

