

Healthy gums

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Bowman
D E N T A L



Why are healthy gums important?

Healthy gums create a seal around the tooth, blocking bacteria from attacking the fibres and bone that hold teeth in place. They also promote fresh, clean breath and add to the appearance of your smile.

Healthy gums allow you to chew with comfort and to smile with more confidence.

What do healthy gums look like?

Healthy gums are pink and firm with no areas of redness or swelling. They do not bleed when brushed or flossed and have an 'orange-peel' texture (known as stippling). Healthy gums follow the curve of the tooth, showing a classic scalloped edge.

Signs of unhealthy gums include: inflammation (gingivitis); bleeding when teeth are brushed or flossed; receding gums; one or more teeth start to become loose; and persistent bad breath.

Gingivitis is treatable, but if left unchecked it can lead to the destruction of the bone and tissues that support the teeth (periodontitis); a condition which is irreversible.

What causes gum disease?

The main cause of gum disease is plaque, a sticky invisible film that builds up on teeth and contains millions of bacteria. As plaque accumulates at the gum line, the bacterial toxins irritate the gums causing them to become tender, red and swollen.

Smoking, hormonal changes, diabetes and some drugs can contribute to the onset and progression of gum disease.

How does gum disease affect our general medical health?

Gum disease not only has an impact on the immediate gum tissue and tooth support structures, it also affects our general medical health.

Women of child bearing age with gum disease are at greater risk of miscarriage or premature birth; and a link is known to exist between gum disease and the incidence of diabetes and stroke. Recent research has also tied periodontal (gum) disease to oral cancer.

How do we keep our gums healthy?

The thorough, daily removal of plaque from all tooth surfaces through brushing and flossing is the key to healthy gums. In addition, a nutritious diet that provides the required levels of calcium and avoids foods that promote tooth decay is essential to good oral health.

Key points to remember when brushing:

- use a soft bristled brush
- aim the bristles at the gum line at 45 degree angle
- push gently and jiggle the brush in short half-tooth movements
- clean the outsides and insides of the upper and lower teeth, keeping the brush aimed at the gum line and
- don't forget to floss.

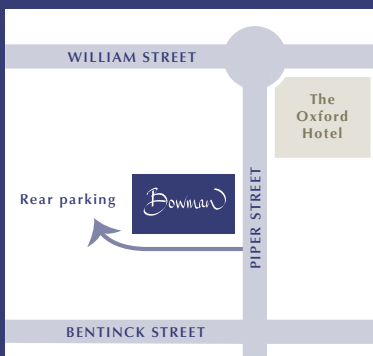


This card is designed purely as an introduction to healthy gums. It is not intended to replace advice from a dental professional.

If you have any questions please feel free to talk to us in person.

We also have pamphlets containing more detailed information on this subject.

Kathy & team



Information courtesy of Australian Dental Association Inc., the University of Adelaide, Dental Outlook Publications Ltd, and Goldstein, RE (1988), *Change your smile*, Quintessence Books.