

Bleeding Gums Can Kill More Than Your Smile.

By Dr. Stephen J. Bellorini

Contrary to what you have been told, bleeding gums are not normal and shouldn't be ignored. Would you be concerned if your hands bleed every time you wash them? Your gums are no different. Bleeding that occurs when you floss, brush, or eat is usually caused by a bacterial infection and represents one of the first symptoms of gum disease (Periodontal Disease). Researchers are finding links between periodontal infection and other diseases of the human body. Heart Disease, Diabetes, Respiratory Disease, Osteoporosis, Artificial Joints, and Pregnancy complications seem to be connected to your oral health. The current theory is that bacteria present in infected gums breaks loose, travels through your bloodstream, and attaches itself to your heart or other body parts. A recent study found that 85% of heart-attack patients have periodontal disease, making this connection higher than the relationship between high cholesterol and heart attacks.

What Should You Do?

Keep your mouth healthy! It is not "just a cleaning" anymore. See your dentist or hygienist at least twice a year for periodic maintenance and screening. Periodontal disease is often painless until it reaches more advanced stages, and like other infections in your body early detection/treatment is essential. We are genuinely concerned that the periodontal therapy we have recommended for you has not been completed and more serious issues may arise that could lead to permanent tooth loss. Please take the time to contact us within the next 2 weeks to continue with this important part of your dental health.

Take a Self-Evaluation Quiz

If you answer yes to any of the following questions you may have periodontal disease.

1. Do your gums bleed when you brush, floss, or eat?
2. Do your teeth feel like they are moving?
3. Are your gums receding?
4. Do your teeth look longer?
5. Do you have persistent bad breath?
6. Does your bite feel different?
7. Is it difficult for you to chew?
8. Have you noticed pus around your teeth?
9. Do your gums feel tender or look swollen?
10. Do your teeth or gums hurt?

Other Factors

Over 80% of adults have gum disease. Smoking, excessive alcohol, diet, and poor oral hygiene can contribute to the onset and progression of the disease, but genetics seem to play a significant role. If there is a history of gum disease or premature tooth loss with your parents or siblings your chance of having this disease is extremely high.

Treatments

A better understanding of this disease has created new treatment alternatives. Antibiotics, deep cleanings, laser treatments, mouth rinses, and homecare, used individually or in combination, are reducing the need for more aggressive options like Surgery.

Neglect, Not Age, Leads to Tooth Loss

[Regular Dental Visits: Important](#)

[Dental Visits Are for Everyone](#)

[What Else Can You Do?](#)

You may think that as you get older, you'll lose some of your teeth. You probably know older people who have bridges, dentures or implants to replace missing teeth. It may seem obvious that tooth loss is just another part of aging.

It isn't.

Just as taking care of your body can keep you active, taking care of your teeth can ensure that you keep them. If your teeth and gums are healthy, there's no reason for you to lose your teeth.

Regular Dental Visits: Important

One of the keys to keeping teeth for a lifetime is to visit a dentist regularly. But many older people don't.

Many older people grew up during a time when preventive dental care was not emphasized. Some may not realize how important it is. They may believe that toothaches, bleeding gums, loose teeth or

mouth pain are just part of getting older. In fact, they can be signs of gum disease, or other problems.

Regular dental checkups and professional cleanings are important. During an exam, your dentist checks for tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer.

A lack of dental visits can result in untreated tooth decay and gum disease. Both of these can lead to lost teeth. Missing teeth, toothache or mouth pain also can change how and what you eat. This means you may not get the nutrients you need to stay healthy.

Visiting the dentist is especially important for older people because they may have other medical conditions. These conditions can complicate dental treatment. Hundreds of medicines can cause side effects in your mouth. Some of these, such as dry mouth, can increase the risk of tooth decay or other oral health problems.

Saliva is a natural cavity-fighter. It neutralizes acids produced by bacteria that can cause tooth decay. Saliva helps wash away food and bacteria. It also contains minerals that strengthen teeth. Dry mouth reduces saliva. This makes you more vulnerable to cavities. Dentists can treat dry mouth. They also can prescribe fluoride rinses or gels to help keep teeth strong.

Older people are more likely to get cavities for other reasons, too. Receding gums can allow acids to get to the roots of teeth and cause cavities. Older fillings can break down. This leaves teeth susceptible to decay.

Dental Visits Are for Everyone

People who have lost all of their teeth often think they don't need to visit the dentist anymore. But most people without teeth have dentures. Regular dental visits will help to keep dentures in good condition and fitting properly. The bone under your gums changes over time. Dentures that fit fine at one visit may need to be replaced or altered at the next visit.

Oral cancer also affects older people, whether or not they have teeth. More than half of the 8,000 deaths each year caused by oral cancer are in people 65 or older. If oral cancer is detected early, it can be treated successfully. Avoiding the dentist makes early detection less likely.

What Else Can You Do?

Brushing and flossing are as important as ever for older people. To keep teeth and gums healthy, you should brush at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss once a day.

Some older people may have trouble handling a toothbrush or floss because of arthritis, a disability or an illness. Special toothbrushes and floss holders are available. They have been adapted to be easier to hold. Sometimes, an electric toothbrush helps. Your dentist or dental hygienist can help you find alternatives to make the job easier.