



7 Step Checklist to Determine if You Have Gum Disease



Gum disease is something that many people suffer from. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, half of American adults experience some form of the disease. Known as gingivitis or periodontal disease depending on the severity, these ailments can range from gum inflammation to major damage to the soft tissue or bone that support the teeth. If you suspect that you might have gum disease, the way that you care for your teeth and gums from this day forward will determine whether you're able to stop the disease in its tracks or if it continues to progress. Take a look at the checklist below to determine if you do in fact have gum disease.

1. Are Your Gums Bleeding?

Bleeding gums can be a sign that you currently have or could potentially have gum disease. However, bleeding gums can also be a sign of many other things –platelet disorders, hormonal changes, even leukemia. Of course, bleeding gums when brushing too hard or flossing are a different story, and typically aren't cause for concern. But if your gums are bleeding frequently without an obvious cause, it's in your best interest to get them checked out by a dentist as soon as possible. Although you may not be dealing with gum disease, you could possibly be dealing with a number of health issues. Getting the opinion of a medical professional is definitely advised.



2. Are Your Gums Tender, Red, or Swollen?



Swollen, tender gums are often an indication of gum disease. As with almost any other physical symptom, there could possibly be a number of other causes, as well. If you're dealing with painful, swollen gums, it's certainly in your best interest to have them checked out by a dentist, but there are a few things you can do on your own to try and alleviate your issues. For one, take care to brush your teeth gently. While brushing hard may seem to make sense to remove the most grime from your teeth, it can actually damage the delicate tissue of your gums. Along the same lines, be gentle when flossing. Take care to slide floss between teeth rather than forcing it in.

3. Do You Have Bad Breath?



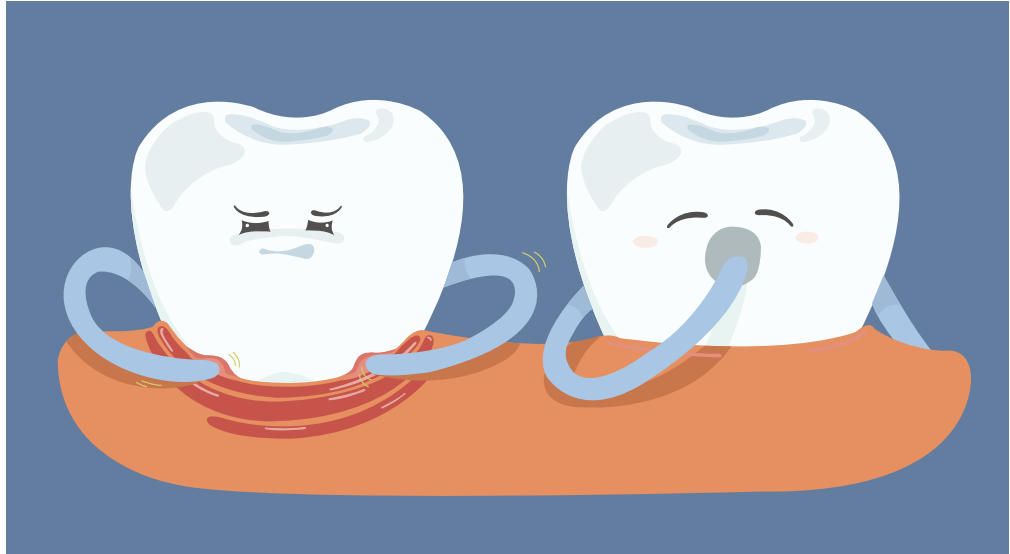
Bad breath is an ailment no one wants to deal with. It's embarrassing, and can cause you to avoid a number of social interactions. It can also be an indication of gum disease. In order to eliminate your bad breath to the best of your ability, make it a point to practice good oral hygiene on a daily basis. Brush several times a day, and floss daily to get rid of the leftover food particles in your mouth. You can also use an antibacterial mouthwash as well. Gum disease is caused by the buildup of plaque on teeth, which is also a major cause of bad breath. By stepping up your oral hygiene routine you can make improvements to your overall oral health.

4. Are Your Teeth Loose or Shifting?



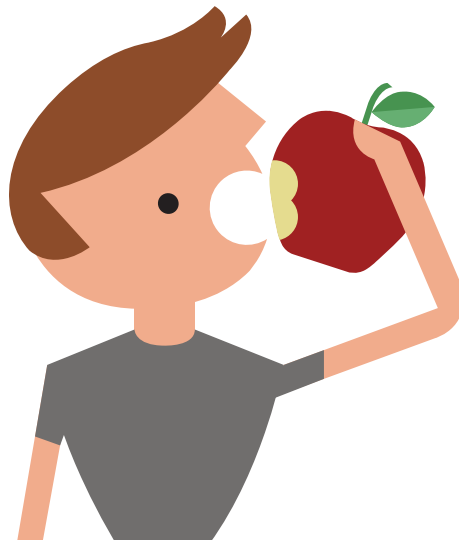
By the time it gets to the point that your teeth are loose or shifting, then you've probably had gum disease for a number of years. This certainly isn't an early sign, so a significant amount of damage has likely been done. Teeth become loose once the bone and ligaments that hold them in place become damaged, often to the point of being destroyed. If you have loose or shifting teeth, it's important to see your dentist immediately. If you don't begin the process of halting the damage at once, you may end up losing your teeth.

5. Do You Have Receding Gums?



Receding gums are often one of the first signs of gum disease. When this gum recession occurs, pockets form between the teeth and gum line, which makes it incredibly easy for harmful, disease-causing bacteria to build. If you don't see your dentist to remedy the situation immediately, this can also lead to tooth loss. The downside of tooth recession is that it's a gradual process, and one that you may not notice initially. You may think your teeth look a bit longer after awhile, at which point you should see your dentist. Luckily, there are treatments to repair the damage and prevent further recession in the future.

6. Is It Painful to Chew?



When it comes to pain when chewing, it's much more difficult to narrow down the cause. There are a number of reasons why it may be painful to chew, one of them being gum disease. Others causes can be cavities, TMJ, or even oral cancers. While you may not initially think of gum disease when it becomes painful to chew, you should still visit your dentist for a thorough exam. No matter the cause, you will need to remedy the situation to prevent future complications and to ease your pain.

7. Do You Have Sensitive Teeth?

Tooth sensitivity is another symptom that can be caused by several different ailments. This sensitivity can be caused by a number of things, from hot or cold foods, to sweet or sour foods, to breathing cold air. Your teeth will become sensitive when your gum tissue begins to recede, exposing the dentin underneath. When the roots of your teeth are exposed, outside stimuli is able to reach the nerves in your teeth, resulting in pain. There are many things that can lead to this sensitivity, only one of which is gum disease. Other causes are brushing too hard, tooth decay, teeth grinding, plaque buildup, and teeth whitening products, to name a few. While on it's own, tooth sensitivity may not be cause for concern, coupled with any of the other above-mentioned symptoms it could be an indication of a serious problem.

As you can see, there are many different symptoms and signs of gum disease. While it will be impossible to diagnose on your own, if you have noticed any of the above issues, it's important to visit your dentist in order to determine what you are facing. When caught early, there are many treatments for gum disease that can ease your pain and suffering, and possibly even reverse the damage. Regular visits to your dentist to ensure that your teeth and gums are in tip top shape is essential to good oral health and avoiding these types of issues.

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