

Take a good look at your gums

Plaque buildup, crooked teeth, illness, poorly fitting dentures, trapped food particles, and certain medications can irritate or destroy your gums. With good oral hygiene, however, you can prevent gum (periodontal) disease. If caught in the early stages, gum disease is easily treated. If ignored, the gums and supporting tissues weaken and shrink, and your teeth may loosen and fall out.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of periodontal disease is important for early treatment. Pay attention to the following:

- Swollen red gums that bleed easily (a condition called gingivitis).
- Teeth that are exposed at the gum line (a sign that gums have pulled away from the teeth).
- Permanent teeth that are loose or separate from each other.
- Bad breath and a foul taste in the mouth.
- Pus around the gums and teeth.

