

Gum Disease



CANADIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION
DENTAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

The **Dental Information System (D.I.S.)** is a series of booklets by the Canadian Dental Association (CDA).

The CDA is the national organization of the dental profession. The CDA's goal is that you have the best dental health possible. The D.I.S. can help you reach this goal.

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- *Bleaching, Bonding and Veneers*
- *Care After Minor Oral Surgery*
- *Dental Care for Seniors*
- *Growing Up... What It Means for Your Child's Dental Health*
- *Gum Disease*
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Gum Disease

Gum disease is one of the most common dental problems adults face, but gum disease can begin at just about any age. Gum disease often develops slowly and without causing any pain.

Sometimes you may not notice any signs until the disease is serious and you are in danger of losing teeth.

The good news is:

- gum disease can almost always be prevented,
- if it starts, it can be treated and
- it can even be turned around (or **reversed**) in its early stages.

Here's what you will learn about in this booklet:

- ▶ *How gum disease happens* page 2
- ▶ *How to prevent it* page 4
- ▶ *Problems that result from it* page 7
- ▶ *What you can do about it* page 8



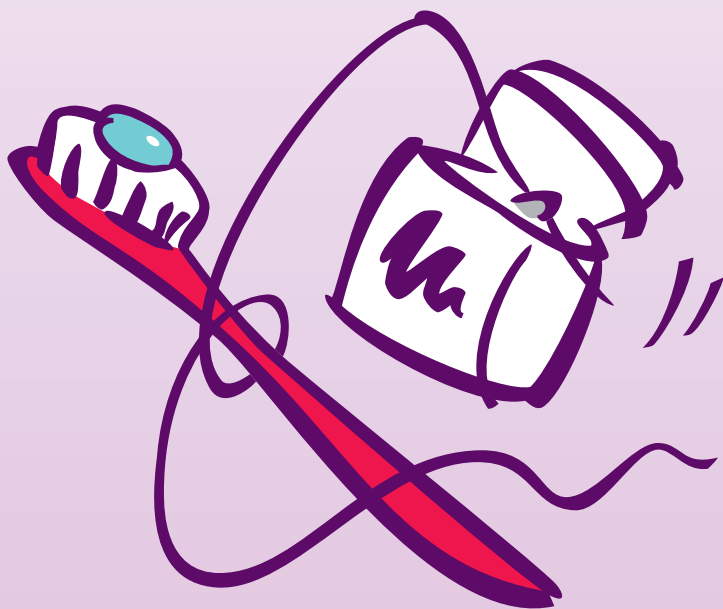
How it happens

Healthy gums and bone hold teeth firmly in place. Gums attach to teeth just below the edge of the gums. Gum disease affects the attachment between gums and teeth.

Here's what happens:

1 Gum disease begins with plaque. Plaque is clear and sticky and contains germs (or bacteria). It forms on your teeth every day. It also forms where your teeth and your gums meet.

2 If plaque is not removed every day by brushing and flossing, it hardens into tartar (also called calculus). Tartar cannot be removed by brushing and flossing. Tartar can lead to an infection at the point where the gums attach to the teeth (called the “point of attachment”). In these early stages, gum disease is called **gingivitis**. Your gums may be a bit red and bleed when you brush, but you may not notice anything.



3 As **gingivitis** gets worse, tiny pockets of infection form at the “point of attachment.” You cannot see them, but you may notice puffy gums, traces of blood on your toothbrush, or a change in the colour of your gums. Your gums will probably not be sore.

4 Over time, the infection breaks down the gum tissue that attaches to the teeth. This is called “attachment loss.” At this point, you will notice swelling, bleeding or colour changes in your gums.

5 Along with “attachment loss,” gum disease causes the bone that holds your teeth in place to break down too. If gum disease is not treated, teeth become loose and in danger of falling out.

