

Digital guide to...

Healthier gums



It doesn't come as a surprise that adopting a healthy lifestyle can have many benefits. It can make you feel fit and strong while helping to keep nasty diseases at bay. It's also good for your mental wellbeing too. There is so much advice about how to keep your body in top condition, but there is one element that is often overlooked – the health of the mouth.

Having good oral hygiene should be a natural part of your routine to achieve a healthy lifestyle. The good news is that it doesn't take much to have and maintain healthy gums.

As part of National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation have teamed up with Corsodyl toothpaste, to give you some great tips for healthier gums.



Why healthy gums are important

Healthy gums are vital for strong teeth. Just like your skin, they are made of soft tissue. It covers the bones that support your teeth by forming a tight seal. This limits the places where plaque bacteria can grow in your mouth.

Having healthy gums means you can keep your teeth for longer. It will also reduce your risk of having pain and sensitivity in your mouth.

Finally, healthy gums are linked to a healthy body. According to scientific research, healthy gums can lower the risk of these wider disease, conditions and complications....



Heart disease



Strokes



Dementia



Early births



Diabetes

“ Toothbrushing goes far beyond keeping your teeth and gums healthy. It also improves your quality of life. ”

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive, Oral Health Foundation



Healthy gums vs unhealthy gums

Healthy gums should be firm and a light shade of pink, although they may contain other pigments depending on your ethnic origin.

When your gums are unhealthy, it will often lead to swelling, soreness or infection of the tissues supporting the teeth. This is called gum disease.

Most people suffer from some form of gum disease. However, as the disease develops very slowly in most people, and it can be slowed down to a rate that can be easily managed.

All gum disease is caused by plaque. Plaque is a film of bacteria which forms on the surface of the teeth every day. Many of the bacteria in plaque are completely harmless, but there are some that have been shown to be the main cause of gum disease.

To prevent and treat gum disease, you need to make sure you remove all the plaque from your teeth every day.

There are two main forms of gum disease: gingivitis and periodontitis...



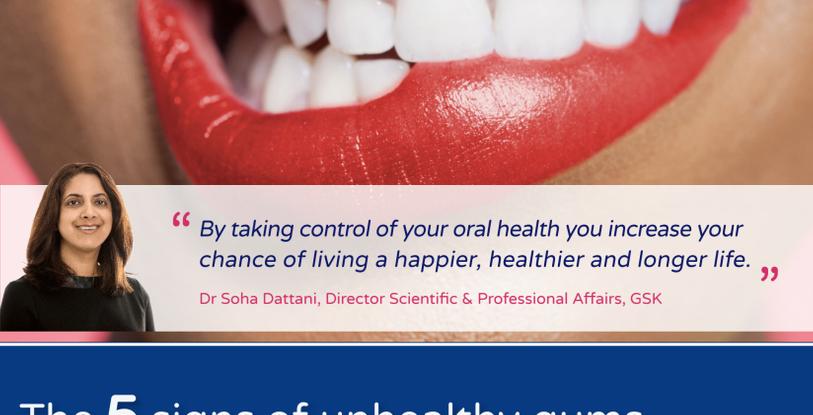
Gingivitis

Gingivitis means 'inflammation of the gums' and is the earliest form of gum disease. This is when the gums around the teeth become very red and swollen. Often the swollen gums bleed when they are brushed during cleaning.

If this happens, book an appointment with a dentist and don't allow the problem get worse.

Periodontitis

Long-standing gingivitis can turn into periodontal disease. There are a number of types of periodontal disease and they all affect the tissues supporting the teeth. As the disease gets worse the bone anchoring the teeth in the jaw is lost, making the teeth loose. If this is not treated, the teeth may eventually fall out.



“ By taking control of your oral health you increase your chance of living a happier, healthier and longer life. ”

Dr Soha Dattani, Director Scientific & Professional Affairs, GSK

The 5 signs of unhealthy gums

There are a number of key symptoms for gum disease. Some signs can mean your gum disease is in its early stages while others mean your gum disease is more advanced. If you notice any of the below, it is important that you visit your dentist immediately.

Like with any condition, the sooner you can get it diagnosed, the more effective treatment will be - and the less impact it will have on the quality of your life.

1. Bleeding Gums

Healthy gums don't bleed, so if you see blood as you brush, this can be a sign of gum disease. Be proactive and visit your dentist as soon as possible.



2. Swollen gums

Swollen, or inflamed, gums can appear red and puffy and could be an early sign of gum disease. It happens when plaque builds up on, around or in between the teeth.



3. Receding gums

Receding gums occur when your gums draw back from your teeth, left untreated this could expose the root beneath. One of the first signs of this is tooth sensitivity.



4. Bad breath

Bad breath - or halitosis - happens as plaque breaks down pieces of food in your mouth. The bacteria that is released may give off unpleasant smelling gas.



5. Loose teeth

Tooth loss can be caused by one of the most severe forms of gum disease, called periodontitis. Periodontitis is an infection of the tissues, ligaments and bones that surround and support your teeth.



How to keep your gums healthy....

It is easy to get your mouth clean and healthy, and keep it that way. A simple routine can help prevent most dental problems. Just a few minutes every day is all that is needed to achieve great oral health and a fit set of gums.

By following these basic habits, you give your gums the best possible chance to stay healthy...

Tooth brushing

Brushing your teeth removes plaque and bits of food from the inner, outer and biting surfaces of your teeth.

The best time to brush is last thing at night and at least one other time during the day. And always use a fluoride toothpaste.

Brushing your teeth, doesn't only protect your gum health, it also makes the teeth stronger and less prone to decay.

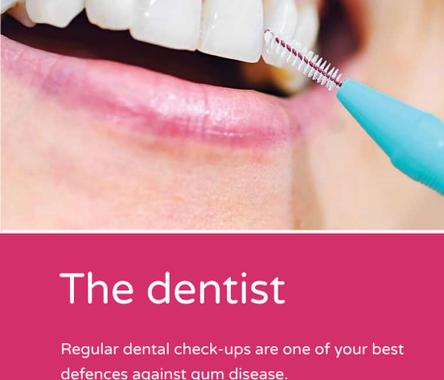


Interdental & floss

You can clean between your teeth with an 'interdental' brush or dental floss.

Cleaning in between your teeth removes plaque and bits of food from between your teeth and under your gumline - areas a toothbrush can't reach.

When flossing or using interdental brushes, keep to a regular pattern and remember not to miss any teeth. It helps to look in the mirror.



The dentist

Regular dental check-ups are one of your best defences against gum disease.

This is because the early stages of gum disease are not always painful and can often go undetected.

A professional check-up can spot the symptoms of gum disease even if they aren't obvious, allowing you to take steps to treat it before it gets more serious.

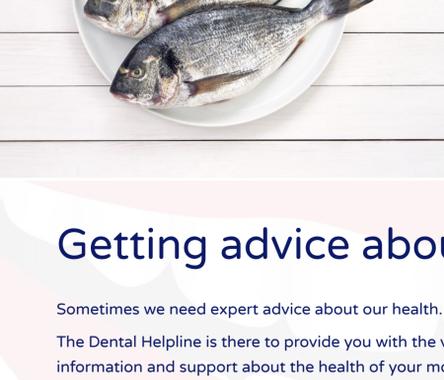


A healthy diet

A diet that is rich in vitamins, minerals and fresh fruit and vegetables can help to prevent gum disease.

Be on the lookout for foods that have vitamin C, vitamin B12 or omega-3 fatty acids.

Such foods include fruits, berries, and leafy greens (vitamin C). Animal products, such as milk, eggs, and meat (vitamin B12). And oily fish like salmon or sardines (omega-3).



Getting advice about your oral health

Sometimes we need expert advice about our health. The Dental Helpline is there to provide you with the very best information and support about the health of your mouth.



Where to go for more information

National Smile Month is organised by the Oral Health Foundation and supports millions of people in developing and maintaining a healthy smile.

Everybody deserves the right to good oral health. By working together during National Smile Month, you can make this happen.

Please visit the National Smile Month website, where you can learn more about our amazing campaign and how to get involved.

