

Signs and symptoms of gum disease



The signs and symptoms of gum disease are often mild and may go unnoticed until the damage is extensive.^{1,2,5} In severe cases, gum disease can result in the loosening or loss of teeth.^{1,2,3,5} If you experience symptoms of gum disease, it's important to seek professional treatment.^{2,4} Here I'll explain the most common symptoms of gum disease to look out for.^{1,6}

Persistent bad breath

Persistent bad breath that doesn't go away may be a sign of gum disease.¹ However, it may also be linked to other causes such as diet, smoking, or throat and nasal infections.⁷

Tender or bleeding gums

Tender gums or gums that bleed (for example, during tooth cleaning) are also common symptoms of gum disease.^{1,6}

Increased sensitivity

If you have sensitivity around your teeth and gums, it may be because the root of a tooth is more exposed.⁶ This could be due to either gum recession or the development of a periodontal (gum) pocket.² It may be harmless but should be checked by your dentist.

Loose or shifting teeth

Gum disease may cause loss of bone around the teeth. This may lead to loose or shifting teeth, which can make it hard to eat.^{1,6} If this happens, seek professional treatment from your dentist.

Red or swollen gums

Red and swollen gums are usually a sign that the tissues surrounding the teeth are not healthy.⁶ Healthy gums should be pink and firm.⁸

Gum recession

The gums can recede (pull away from the teeth) due to inflammation.^{1,8} Receding gums expose the roots of teeth to decay and infection, which may lead to increased sensitivity.^{1,8}

When should I seek help?

If you experience any of the symptoms above, it's important that you seek professional advice from your dentist. Even if you don't notice any obvious problems, it's important to attend regular dental check-ups as they will include a thorough examination of your gums and supporting tissues.^{1,8}

Can't get an appointment with your usual dentist? You can use a Bupa Dental Care dentist even if you're not usually their patient.

To use this service, please call

0333 015 5255

Lines are open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm.
We may record or monitor our calls.

Please note, this service is free, and doesn't affect your benefit allowances.

Sources

Periodontal (gum) disease. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. nidcr.nih.gov, last reviewed November 2024

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