



Gingivitis

The Most Common Disease In America

What is gingivitis? Gingivitis is an infection of the gums (“gingiva” = gums, “itis” = inflammation or infection). 99% of all Americans have it.

What causes gingivitis? Plaque is made up of primarily bacteria. Basically, the “bugs” are going to the bathroom on our teeth.

How do I know if I have it? If your gums **bleed** when you brush with gentle to moderate pressure, you have gingivitis. When your dental professional measures the pocket depth around your teeth and it is **greater than 3mm deep**, you probably have gingivitis. If your gums are **swollen**, you have gingivitis. If your gums are **tender**, you have gingivitis. If you have **calculus** (tarter or calcified plaque) on your teeth under your gums, you probably have gingivitis.

How do I get rid of it? Have your teeth thoroughly cleaned by your hygienist. They will remove all the calculus (tarter or calcified plaque) and remove much of the infectious tissue. Learn how you can **remove ALL of the plaque OFF your teeth daily**, with PROPER brushing and flossing and using an interproximal brush (if able to get it between the back teeth). If you do NOT have any bone loss, the gums will heal in 3-5 days. The pocket depth measurements will likely decrease to 3mm or less. If not, the gingivitis may have progressed into the bone. This disease is now called Periodontitis (“perio” = around, “dont” = tooth, “-itis” = inflammation or infection; therefore, the word means “infection of the structures around the tooth including the bone”).

There are contributing factors:

Calculus (tarter) on your teeth below the gums holding plaque underneath.

Rough areas on your teeth that collect plaque, like holes from decay, rough dental work, overhanging fillings or crowns.

Exposed root surfaces due to previous gum disease.



Braces. Orthodontic appliances collect and trap plaque. You must be extra diligent to remove plaque and food around your brackets. To provide a thorough cleaning, your hygiene team must remove the arch wire and then completely clean AROUND ALL the brackets, thereby helping to **prevent gingivitis AND decay**.