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Ask Yourself (1975)

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Yourself

**Are my gums
red and swollen?**

**Do they bleed
when I clean my
teeth?**

**Do they hurt
even when I just
touch my gums?**

Many people think that bleeding gums are normal. Others think they are unimportant. Both are mistaken. If you have these signs of gum disease you should see your dentist at once. If he can treat you he will do so...or if necessary, he will refer you to a periodontist who specializes in treating gum disease.

One cause of gum disease is a bacterial film called plaque which builds up on the teeth. When plaque is not removed, the bacteria produce chemicals which damage the tissues. Plaque can also harden into a material called calculus or tartar. As more plaque builds up on top of the calculus the gums become irritated. Brushing and using dental floss daily will help keep the plaque from accumulating and causing damage to your gums. However, neither toothbrushing nor flossing can remove calculus. Once it is formed only a dentist or dental hygienist can remove it.

Having your teeth cleaned periodically in a dental office is one way of preventing gum disease. If you see your dentist regularly he or she can also correct other conditions in your mouth that might make your gums sore.

If you have early periodontal (gum) disease and it is not treated, a more serious disease, periodontitis, can develop. Periodontitis, too, is a progressive disease which, if not treated, can lead to the loss of some or all of your teeth. It can also destroy the bones and other tissues that support the teeth. Periodontal disease is the chief cause of tooth loss in adults.

Such tooth loss is needless. If you should develop gum disease your dentist will give you professional help by treating the diseased gums and teaching you to care for your teeth and gums on a daily basis. This will prevent further serious damage to your teeth, bones and gums.

Produced in cooperation
with the American Academy of Periodontology



American Dental Association

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