

# Gingivitis

Tooth sensitivity affects approximately half of the population. It is often experienced as a pain or an uncomfortable sensation triggered by sweet, sour, hot, or cold food and beverages. Some people even report sensitivity from our cold mountain air. Tooth sensitivity can be generalized (everywhere), or localized to certain areas of the mouth.

## What is Gingivitis?

Gingivitis is a bacterial infection that attacks gum tissue and the tiny gingival fibers that attach to the tooth or root surface. The bacteria cause localized or generalized inflammation or swelling of the soft tissue around the teeth. If left untreated, gingivitis can lead to a more serious condition called periodontal disease where the tooth begins to lose its attachment to the jaw bone.

## Signs of Gingivitis

- Painful gums
- Swollen, puffy gums
- Tissues appear red in colour
- Spontaneous bleeding or bleeding with brushing or flossing
- Purulent discharge (pus)
- Bad taste in the mouth
- Receding gums
- Tooth sensitivity

## Treatment for Gingivitis

The good news is that gingivitis is reversible with proper treatment. The earlier it is detected, the better and easier it is to treat. Gingivitis can be treated by a hygienist at a dental office. A hygienist performs scaling procedures which remove the bacteria from the surface of the tooth and root of the tooth. By removing the bacteria, the gums have time to heal themselves. Meticulous home care including brushing, flossing, rinsing is needed to help cure the infection and to prevent it from re-occurring. A re-evaluation appointment is often done after initial treatment to ensure the infection has healed. This is sometimes also determined by a set of measurement called probing depths which measure how attached the gums are to the tooth (more attached = healthier). In rare case antibiotics may be required before or after hygiene treatment to cure the infection.

## Types of Gingivitis

There are various types of gingivitis. The dental team can determine the type of gingivitis. Once it is determined, a course of treatment can be recommended.

- 1) **Plaque induced gingivitis** - Inflammation of gingiva resulting from dental plaque surrounding the teeth
- 2) **Non-plaque induced gingivitis** - Inflammation or lesions caused by a bacterial, viral or genetic origin
- 3) **Pregnancy-associated gingivitis** - A tumour growth most commonly on the gums in between the teeth as result of plaque
- 4) **Acute Necrotizing ulcerative gingivitis (ANUG)** - Rapid onset of inflammation and destruction of the gingiva surrounding the teeth. Predisposing factors include gingivitis, smoking, stress, poor nutrition, lack of sleep

## Periodontitis

Periodontitis is a more severe form of gingivitis. It is an inflammatory disease that causes a destruction of the jaw bone and the gum tissues around it. With severe periodontal disease and significant loss of bone around the teeth, teeth can become loose. Once bone has been destroyed, it almost impossible for it to grow back.

Once periodontal disease has started, it cannot be cured or reversed, only maintained or stabilized. It is possible to get the gums back to a healthy state, but not the bone. The goal of the dental staff is to prevent progression of the disease by providing regular hygiene appointments where the hygienist will clean the bacteria off of the teeth. The bacteria is also cleaned out from under the gums, often referred to as a "deep cleaning."

If the bacteria is too deep to be accessed using the tools at our office, a referral to a specialist called a periodontist may be needed. The periodontist has different techniques they can use to access these deep areas. Sometimes, minor surgery is needed. Of course, this is a last resort as we also strive for a conservative, non surgical approach using individualized home care education and instruction.

