

GINGIVITIS: CALL TO ACTION

WHAT IS GINGIVITIS ANYWAY? Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums caused by a plaque build-up in the mouth. Signs of gingivitis include red, swollen, tender gums that may bleed when you brush. Left untreated, it may lead to serious periodontal disease and eventually, tooth loss.

WHO IS LIKELY TO GET GINGIVITIS? Anyone can get gingivitis. In fact, research has shown that 50% of Canadian adults may have gingivitis and many of these people do not know it. Gingivitis often goes undetected because it is difficult to measure so this incidence level may, in reality, be higher.

WHY SHOULD I CARE? Oral health and oral inflammation are linked to overall health. Specific associations have been made with some chronic systemic diseases and conditions such as poor blood sugar control in diabetes, a variety of heart diseases, pre-term low birth weight babies, and certain lung diseases.

SOME NEW FACTS ON THE LINKS BETWEEN ORAL HEALTH AND OVERALL HEALTH:

Diabetes: If you have diabetes, you may have a greater risk of developing periodontal disease. Dental hygiene and mouthrinse/antibiotic treatment for periodontal disease may help reduce blood sugar levels in diabetics by up to 11%.

Heart disease: Periodontal disease—including gingivitis—is associated with a 19% increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Pre-term low birth weight (PTLBW): PTLBW accounts for about 80% of all infant deaths that occur around the time of birth and may cause long-term disabilities. Dental hygiene services for individuals with periodontal disease (which includes gingivitis) may reduce the risk of PTLBW by 50%.

Respiratory disease: Patients in long-term care facilities or hospital intensive care units who receive oral hygiene care may reduce their risk of developing pneumonia by 40 to 58%.

SO WHAT CAN I DO? Happily, researchers have also found that good oral hygiene care reduces and prevents the progression of gingivitis. The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association recommends the following steps to help you maintain good oral health as an integral part of overall health:

BRUSH: Use a power toothbrush with rotation-oscillation action if possible. It is better at removing plaque and reducing gum inflammation than manual toothbrushes.

Use fluoride toothpaste to help prevent tooth decay.

FLOSS: Flossing reaches the areas between your teeth to remove plaque. To make flossing easier, try using tools such as floss holder, automatic flossers, interdental brushes, picks, and irrigators.

RINSE: Use an essential oil antiseptic mouthrinse to reduce and prevent plaque and gingivitis more than brushing and flossing can alone.

And finally, make regular visits to your dental hygienist for specialized oral health care.



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