

Dr Sheila Dobe's Tips

It is important to visit your dentist regularly and get your mouth screened for periodontal disease so if you have the condition you can get it treated right away.



Women and healthy gums



The Younger woman

As a young woman due to the levels of hormones progesterone and estrogen the gums can be more sensitive and hence be more irritated with plaque and food particles. Gums may sometimes feel swollen and tender. They may also appear red in color. Similar symptoms may happen a few days before your period due to increased progesterone in the system.

It is important to brush and floss regularly and visit your dentist every six months so that plaque from below your gum line can be removed.

The Older Woman

As you get older it seems that your whole body is falling apart! That is also true of your teeth and mouth. Women in their 40's may feel that their mouths feel 'different'. You may experience discomfort including pain or burning, especially after eating salty, peppery or sour foods. Also if you take estrogen supplements, they may cause your mouth to feel very dry. There are many products that can help with a dry mouth. Ask your dentist about them.

ASK DR.DOBEE

I am four months pregnant and I have noticed my gums are bleeding when I brush my teeth – what should I do?

When you are pregnant many women experience increased gingivitis (inflammation of the gums). This usually starts at the second or third month and gradually increases till the eighth month. The symptoms include bleeding, swollen gums, redness and tenderness.

The bleeding is due to an increase in inflammation. You should keep brushing and flossing even more meticulously than before to reduce the bleeding. You may also want to visit your dentist and ask them to show you brushing techniques that would help reduce the bleeding.

I'm six months pregnant and have a little swollen area on my gums that bleeds very easily, even when I barely touch it. My gums are very sore – what can I do?

Sometimes there may be such a severe reaction to a local irritant that a lump forms; this is called a 'pregnancy tumor'. The tumor is harmless however you should ask your dentist to check if it needs to be removed.

My dentist says that I have gum disease and that I should get it treated. I am thinking of getting pregnant in the next year. Can having the disease affect my baby?

Periodontal disease, also known as 'gum disease', is bacterial infection that damages the gum and the bone surrounding your teeth.

Studies have shown that periodontal disease can cause a significant risk for premature delivery and low birth weight. So if you have any problem with your teeth or gums it is advisable to take care of it before you get pregnant.

Does taking birth control pills affect my teeth?

If you are taking oral contraception it is even more important to maintain good oral hygiene as you are more susceptible to gum problems due to the change in hormone levels. To avoid problems, you should make sure you have your teeth checked and cleaned at least every six months.