Gum disease can be painless, so you might not know you have it. But mild gum disease can turn serious if not caught and treated early. If it progresses into periodontitis, you could even lose teeth.

**What causes gum disease?**

The sticky plaque on your teeth is filled with bacteria. If you don’t brush and floss regularly to remove it, gum disease can set in.

Early gum disease can usually be reversed by a routine cleaning at your dentist’s office, plus a good home care routine.

**How it can harm your health**

If you have diabetes, a gum infection can make it harder to control your blood sugar. [1] People with rheumatoid arthritis may experience more joint pain. [2] Gum disease can also increase your risk of heart attack and stroke. [3] And expectant moms have a higher risk of premature and low birthweight babies. [4]

**Prevention is the best medicine**

If you follow these simple dental health habits, you may be able to avoid or reverse the damage of gum disease, which can impact your whole-body health.

- Brush twice and floss at least once a day.
- Switch to a new toothbrush every three months.
- Rinse with an antimicrobial mouthwash for extra protection.
- Schedule regular exams and cleanings.
- Keep your blood sugar under control if you’re diabetic.
- Eat healthy and limit sugary snacks.
• Don’t smoke. If you do smoke, quit now.

Learn more about gum disease

3. Gum Disease and the Connection to Heart Disease; health.harvard.edu; Accessed Aug. 31, 2021.
4. Dental health during pregnancy; March of Dimes; January 2013.

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