AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION
QUEENSLAND

GUM DISEASE
DON'T IGNORE BLEEDING GUMS

Bleeding is usually a sign that something untoward has happened to your body, yet many people think that it's perfectly normal for their gums to bleed when they brush or floss.

But, of course, it's not; bleeding gums are a sign that your gums are inflamed due to disease-causing bacteria.

Ignoring bleeding which results from brushing and flossing means you stand a real risk of developing a serious form of gum disease.

THE CAUSES OF GUM DISEASE

In addition to plaque, which is largely responsible for the development of gum disease, the health of your gums can also be affected by:

- Smoking and tobacco use
- Genetic predisposition
- Systemic diseases like diabetes and arthritis
- Stress and poor nutrition
- Hormonal fluctuations such as those experienced during puberty, pregnancy, menstruation and menopause

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

There are two main stages of gum disease:

1. GINGIVITIS

This early form of gum disease occurs when dental plaque, the bacterial film that covers the surfaces of your mouth, builds up on your teeth, particularly where the gum and tooth meet.

When this happens, your gums may appear red, swollen and feel extra sensitive, and bleed easily. Fortunately, gingivitis doesn't lead to loss of the bone and tissue that hold your teeth in place and can be reversed with twice daily brushing and flossing, as well as regular professional cleaning by your dentist or dental hygienist.

2. PERIODONTITIS

Ignoring the bleeding caused by gingivitis could lead to a more serious form of gum disease called periodontitis.

The reason this disease is so serious is that it causes your gums to pull away from your teeth, forming spaces (known as "pockets") that can easily become infected. Naturally your body's immune system fights the infection, but this response and the bacterial toxins generated by the infection combine to create a toxic brew that breaks down the bone and tissue that hold your teeth in place and, in severe cases, can lead to their removal.

SIGNS OF GUM DISEASE

The first thing you will notice is bleeding. But don't wait until your gums start causing you pain – go to your dentist to have them checked.

Other telltale signs your gums are in trouble are:

- Red, swollen and tender gums
- Visible tartar deposits between the teeth and gums
- Bad breath
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth, exposing the roots
- Pus from the gums
- Permanent teeth that are loose or shifting away from each other
- Changes in the way your teeth come together when you bite or in the fit of your dentures and bridges.

KEEPING GUM DISEASE AT BAY

You have a range of options to prevent gum disease.

First and foremost, you should maintain a consistent routine of brushing and flossing and regularly see your dentist or hygienist for a professional clean, which removes tartar (calculus or hardened plaque) from hard-toreach areas which can be susceptible to developing gum disease.

Your dentist can also perform regular examinations of your gums for any signs of gum disease. If you have more advanced gum disease they may refer you to a periodontist.

SUPPORTING YOU AND YOUR HEALTHY SMILE

For more information on oral health visit **www.adaq.com.au**