



Dental Health Foundation
Ireland

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Do your gums bleed? ... you may want to investigate that!

Everyone has experienced gum discomfort at one time or other in their lifetime. Most memorable perhaps is the loss of the first baby (primary) tooth, and the arrival of the magical tooth fairy – a gentle reminder from an early age that teeth and the soft gums surrounding them are important and should be cared for.

Gum Health Day (Tuesday, 12th May 2020) throws a spotlight on the importance of gums, and in these challenging Covid-19 times, a poignant reminder to us all that we can take care of our gums, and therefore our own health with a daily routine.

Bleeding gums are a common form of an underlying issue that may be present. A build-up of plaque along your gum line, triggers the irritation and inflammation, causing bleeding when you brush. This tenderness, swelling and bleeding can be a sign of gum disease known as gingivitis. Advanced gum disease (periodontitis) can affect the bones and supporting tissue causing gums to pull away from your teeth, making them look longer than normal – hence the phrase *long in the tooth*.

Gum disease has lasting repercussions such as loose teeth, changes in the way you chew and bite, tooth loss, and perhaps leading to a more serious health concern related to your overall health. Evidence has linked it to heart disease, stroke, dementia, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes to name a few. It usually affects 8 out of 10 people aged 35 years and over across Europe. “A common misunderstanding is that gum disease only affects older people, but the truth is anyone, even children, can get it. Even pets get gum disease” says Orlaith Kennedy, CEO, Dental Health Foundation.

Healthy gums are pink in colour, and don’t bleed with proper toothbrushing and flossing. Brushing your teeth for 2-3 minutes twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste and cleaning



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between your teeth using floss or interdental brushes will protect your gums and your overall health. It's also important to visit your dentist and dental hygienist regularly for a cleaning and a check-up, more especially if you are diabetic or if you are pregnant. Maintaining a healthy diet rich in fruit and vegetables, is good for you, and may also help to reduce the risk for gum disease and other health issues such as heart disease.

The Dental Health Foundation website www.dentalhealth.ie has a wealth of information on how to care for your oral health with tooth, gum, healthy diet and other oral health tips, which can be downloaded by anyone interested in paying attention to their oral health. It's good to know, that even small changes can make a big difference!

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About the Dental Health Foundation

Dental Health Foundation Ireland (DHF) is a dynamic and vital organisation, at the forefront of improving oral health in Ireland, through advocacy and oral health promotion. Founded more than 40 years ago from within the dentistry profession, we adopt proactive engagement across all platforms in working alongside Government, health and dental professionals, national and local organisations, and the public. We encourage thinking and positive action around oral and all body health both nationally and internationally.

Our core values of respect, trust, and innovation underpin our aim to promote excellence as we strive to provide unbiased information on oral health to those who need it.



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DHF produce advice and information to reduce oral health inequalities and to empower the public to make healthier lifestyle choices. We promote partnership with similar organisations to effect positive change through robust collaborations and actively advocate for oral health by participating in relevant policy and advisory bodies. We also work alongside the education and community sectors to keep our oral health awareness message relevant and topical to the broad public audience.

We believe that oral health is the gateway to all body health. It is a dynamic and multifaceted system enabling us to speak, smile, smell taste, touch, chew, swallow and convey a range of emotions through our facial expression with confidence and without pain or discomfort. Oral Health is an essential part of overall health and wellbeing which also enhances social interaction and promotes self-esteem.