



Dental hygienists:  
Your partners in oral  
and overall health



THE CANADIAN DENTAL  
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

# Gingivitis: The plague of plaque

## AS MANY AS 1 OUT OF 2 CANADIANS HAVE GINGIVITIS THAT COULD LEAD TO TOOTH LOSS. ARE YOU ONE OF THEM?

Gingivitis is more than just bad breath. It is an inflammation of the gums caused by a build-up of plaque that could lead to periodontal disease, a serious and *chronic* bacterial infection that affects the gums and bone supporting the teeth. If unchecked, periodontal disease can lead to tooth loss.

**GINGIVITIS IS COMPLETELY CURABLE.  
THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY PERIODONTAL DISEASE IS NOT.**

## HERE IS ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW:

**Anyone can get gingivitis.** Research has shown that as many as 16 million Canadians—young and old—have gingivitis. Many do not even know it.

**The symptoms are in your mouth—and in your sink.** Signs of gingivitis include red, swollen or tender gums that may bleed when you brush or floss.

**You should care.** There is an established, scientific link between your *oral* health and your *overall* health. Specific associations have been made between oral health and certain chronic conditions.

*Heart disease* — If you have periodontal disease, your chance of developing heart disease may jump by 19 percent.

*Diabetes* — If you have diabetes, you may have a greater risk of developing periodontal disease. Dental hygiene and mouth-rinse/antibiotic treatment for periodontal disease may help reduce blood sugar levels in people with diabetes by as much as 11 percent.

*Lung disease* — Patients in long-term-care facilities or hospital intensive-care units who practice good oral hygiene care may reduce their risk of developing pneumonia by as much as 58 percent.

*Preterm low birth weight (PTLBW)* — PTLBW accounts for about 80 percent of all infant deaths that occur around the time of birth and may cause long-term disabilities. Dental hygiene services for pregnant women with periodontal disease (including gingivitis) may reduce the risk of PTLBW by 50 percent.

## YOU CAN FIGHT BACK

Good oral hygiene can keep gingivitis in check. The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association recommends a simple, four-step program:

1. *Brush* your teeth with a power toothbrush that offers rotation/oscillation.
2. *Floss* between your teeth to remove plaque. You can use floss on its own or in a holder or flosser, interdental brushes (for bridges and braces), picks or irrigators.
3. *Rinse* using an antiseptic mouthwash to reduce the accumulation of plaque and prevent gingivitis.
4. *Get regular check-ups.* Your biggest weapon in the battle against gingivitis is a regular visit with your dental hygienist. Why not make an appointment today while you still have a fighting chance?