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?