

# GINGIVITIS

## KNOWLEDGE & PREVENTION



A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN



**Dentistry**  
for Children and Adolescents  
PEDIATRIC SPECIALISTS



Sometimes, even despite parents' best efforts, children develop gingivitis. In fact, gingivitis is surprisingly common. But what can you, as a parent, do about it?

According to ClinicalKey.com, almost all kids will develop gingivitis at least once during their childhood. Luckily though, the condition is normally low risk and usually doesn't require treatment.

But, while normal cases of gingivitis don't require professional treatment, it is still imperative that parents are able to identify its symptoms and take action at home.

In this eBook, we will cover what gingivitis is and what its common symptoms and causes are. And most importantly, we will discuss what steps you should take to fight it and prevent it from re-developing in your child's mouth.



## What is Gingivitis?

Gingivitis is a medical term for inflammation of the gums. It comes from the Latin root "gingivae," which means "the gums."

Gingivitis, like most infections, starts with a bacteria buildup that is left unchecked. In the case of gingivitis, it starts with tooth plaque.

If you're unfamiliar with what plaque is, it's a film of bacteria that forms over and around teeth. It can generally be removed by regular tooth brushing and flossing. But, if those actions aren't enough or can't get to plaque in hard-to-reach places, it can do two things.

First, if not taken care of, it can eventually harden and turn into tartar. Tartar can only be removed during a dental cleaning. And secondly, it can reach below the gum line.

Once plaque reaches below the gum line, it causes an infection called gingivitis.





## Causes & Symptoms

### CAUSES

Poor dental hygiene is the number one cause of gingivitis, but there are other reasons it could develop. See the most common causes below.

- Poor oral hygiene
- Build-up of plaque on teeth
- Overly aggressive tooth brushing
- Medications listing gum enlargement as a side effect
- Mouth breathing or dry mouth
- Vitamin deficiency, especially of Vitamin C
- Metabolic disorders, such as thyroid disorders or uncontrolled diabetes, type 1 or 2
- Down Syndrome, because of impaired immune system



## Causes & Symptoms

### SYMPTOMS

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of identifying gingivitis is that its symptoms are rarely extreme. However, gums bleeding during tooth brushing or flossing are almost always surefire signs of infection.

But remember – gingivitis can normally be treated with a regular oral cleaning regimen. And some of these symptoms, like halitosis, may not be a sign of infection. Halitosis is the technical term for bad breath, and might simply be the unfortunate consequence of a piece of garlic bread rather than gingivitis.

But, it's better to be safe than sorry! If your child is exhibiting one or more of these symptoms, then it's probably time to help them step up their teeth-cleaning game.

- Gums bleeding during or after tooth brushing
- Gums bleeding during or after flossing
- Reddened gums
- Itchy gums
- Enlarged gums
- Halitosis (bad breath)
- Separation of gums and teeth (in extreme cases)





## How to Stop and Prevent Gingivitis

If your child is complaining of any of the symptoms listed above, or you notice them, follow the steps below.

These steps are also good dental practices for everyone, whether or not you suspect gingivitis.

1. If your son or daughter is brushing their own teeth and flossing alone, ask them specific questions about how they go about it. Ask if they are brushing all sides of their teeth and flossing daily.
2. Be in the bathroom the next time your child performs their teeth cleaning routine. Evaluate their technique and point out any areas they can improve in. Remember to look for the length of time they brush for, and make sure they brush and floss every side of their teeth. They should also be flossing the farthest side of their back molars.
3. Don't be afraid to inspect their teeth and gums yourself. If you think you see something abnormal, call your dentist right away. We are available 24/7!
4. Replace your household's toothbrushes monthly. While toothbrushes clean your teeth, they can also harbor bacteria.
5. Monitor your child's diet. Eating sugary and acidic foods promotes oral bacteria growth, which can cause gingivitis. Always wash those treats down with water to reduce your child's mouth bacteria level.
6. Research what amount of Vitamin C your child should be taking in daily, and ensure they are getting that quantity.
7. Schedule biannual checkups with your dentist at Dentistry for Children and Adolescents. Professional cleanings will eliminate built-up plaque or tartar, and x-rays can detect gum infection. Plus, we love to see our patients and their healthy smiles!



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Ensure your child is receiving the best dental care by selecting the right provider for your family's needs. At Dentistry for Children and Adolescents, we deliver oral health care that is comprehensive, accessible and family-centered for children and adolescents.

To learn more about us and the services we can provide your family, call either one of our locations:

**Creve Coeur, MO at 314-567-1122**

**St. Charles, MO at 636-946-5225**