

# Inflammatory diseases of the gums and periodontium

## Information in Easy Language

There are various gum diseases.  
Most of them are caused by inflammation.  
Gum disease can also have other causes,  
such as being a side effect of medication.  
Healthy gums look pale pink.  
They are firmly attached to the teeth and jawbone.

### Gingivitis

Gin-gi-vi-tis is the medical term for gum disease.  
Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums.

### Periodontitis

Pe-ri-o-don-ti-tis is the medical term for a disease  
of the periodontium.

The periodontium includes the gums  
and the jawbone.

The gums and jawbone hold the teeth in place.  
Periodontitis is inflammation of the gums  
and jawbone.



## How do gingivitis and periodontitis develop?

Gingivitis and periodontitis are caused by bacteria in dental plaque.

Plaque accumulates in places that are difficult to clean with a toothbrush.

Plaque builds up between the tooth and gum, for example. Anyone can get gingivitis and periodontitis.

The bacteria in plaque produce toxic substances. These toxic substances enter the narrow gap between the tooth and the gum. The gums then become inflamed. This is called gingivitis.

Gingivitis can lead to periodontitis. In periodontitis, the bacteria also destroy the jawbone around the teeth. This creates deep pockets around the teeth. The gums then rest loosely on the jawbone. These pockets are called gingival pockets. The dentist uses a special instrument to measure the depth of the gingival pockets.

If you have periodontitis, your teeth can become painful and loose. If left untreated, periodontitis can lead to tooth loss.

Periodontitis can also affect other organs, such as the heart and lungs.



## How do you know if you have gingivitis?

If your gums bleed when you brush,  
it may be a sign of inflammation.  
Inflamed gums are red and swollen.  
The gums no longer adhere firmly to the tooth.  
They bleed easily.  
The gums may also hurt.

## How do you know if you have periodontitis?

Periodontitis develops in gingival pockets.  
The surrounding jawbone breaks down.  
The gums often recede.  
Teeth appear longer.  
The tooth necks are often exposed.  
  
The tooth necks may be sensitive  
to heat or cold.  
You may develop bad breath and halitosis.  
If the inflammation is very severe,  
the teeth may become loose.  
If the teeth are very loose,  
they may need to be pulled.



Photo: Imke Kaschke

## What can you do about gingivitis and periodontitis?

Brush your teeth thoroughly to remove all plaque.  
Brush gently, even if it bleeds.

If you remove plaque from the inflamed areas,  
the inflammation will be gone in 2 to 3 days.  
This is why brushing your teeth is so important.

If the inflammation does not improve,  
you should go see a dentist.  
Periodontitis always needs  
to be treated by a dentist.



Photo: Imke Kaschke

Diseases of the teeth and gums  
can be prevented or detected early.  
You should have your teeth and gums  
checked by a dentist every 6 months.  
The check-up is covered by your health insurance.

The dentist also removes plaque and  
tartar during the check-up.



**Special  
Olympics**  
Deutschland



## Who created this information sheet?

This information sheet is from  
Special Olympics Germany, abbreviated: SOG.

SOG is the largest sports organization  
for people with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

For the content of the text, SOG works together with the  
Working Group on Dentistry for People with Disabilities or Special  
Medical Support Needs (**Arbeitsgemeinschaft Zahnmedizin für Menschen  
mit Behinderung oder besonderem medizinischen  
Unterstützungsbedarf**), or, for short, AG ZMB).

The AG ZMB is a group of professional experts.  
Their work is dedicated to improving the oral health  
of people with disabilities.  
The information on this sheet is reliable and up-to-date.

You will find more information on the topic of health in Easy Language  
at: [www.gesundheit-leicht-verstehen.de](http://www.gesundheit-leicht-verstehen.de)

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