Gingivitis

Gingivitis is a form of gum (periodontal) disease that causes swelling (inflammation) of your gums. Gingivitis means there is an *inflammation* (soreness) of the gingiva. The *gingiva* is the soft tissue around the tooth and attached to the sides of the tooth. When these tissues become inflamed, they bleed easily, especially during flossing or brushing. The gums may also become tender and *inflamed* (red and sore). This may cause bad breath. Continued infection around the tooth can eventually cause cavities and loosening of teeth, with the eventual loss of teeth.

The cause of this disease is *plaque* which is a build up of *bacteria* (germs) and sugar. As plaque builds up, it reacts with the saliva in your mouth to form something called *calculus* around the tooth. This substance is irritating to the gums and causes the gingivitis. When this disease process is allowed to continue it eventually causes cavities in teeth and loss of teeth. **Prevention of this problem is the best treatment.** Regular dental check ups and cleaning help with prevention.

PREVENTION

- Brush at least twice a day and floss at least once per day. Ideally you should brush following each meal. When flossing, it is best to floss first, then brush.
- Limit the sugars eaten between meals.
- If your infant sleeps with a bottle, use only water. Juices and sugars while sleeping help promote tooth decay and gingivitis.
- Even the best dental hygiene will not prevent plaque from developing. It is necessary for you to see your dental hygienist or dentist on a regular basis as suggested by them for cleaning and regular checkups. As noted above, keeping your teeth free of plaque will help prevent gingivitis and cavities.
- Your dental caregivers can recommend proper oral hygiene and mouth care for you to follow, as well as suggest special tooth pastes.

SEEK DENTAL AND OR MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have painful, reddened tissue around your teeth
- You have difficulty chewing.
- You notice any loose or infected teeth.

Document Released: 06/13/2002 Document Re-Released: 03/16/2010
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