## THE AVERAGE ADULT IS Missing at Least 2 Teeth.

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Dr. Mardirossian



In soreness and in health, you are connected to your gums for life. Yet despite this long term commitment, gums are often found to be in less than stellar condition. Periodontal disease affects approximately 65 million Americans (about 1 in every 5 people), and if left untreated, may cause damage to the tissues and bone surrounding the teeth and can eventually lead to tooth loss.

Luckily, you can easily fix your relationship with your gums by knowing the signs for the different types of gum disease and visiting a periodontist every year.

**Gingivitis** – Gingivitis is the mildest form of periodontal disease. It causes the gums to become red, swollen and bleed easily. There is usually little or no discomfort at this stage. Gingivitis is often caused by inadequate oral hygiene. It is reversible with professional treatment and good oral home care.

Factors that may contribute to gingivitis include diabetes, smoking, aging, genetic predisposition, systemic diseases and conditions, stress, inadequate nutrition, puberty, hormonal fluctuations, pregnancy, substance abuse, HIV infection and certain medication use.

**Periodontitis** – Untreated gingivitis can advance to periodontitis. With time, plaque can spread and grow below the gum line. Toxins produced by the bacteria in plaque irritate the gums, stimulate a chronic inflammatory response, and the tissues and bone that support the teeth are broken down and destroyed. The gums then separate from the teeth, forming pockets (spaces between the teeth and gums) that become infected. As the disease progresses, the pockets deepen and more gum tissue and bone are destroyed. Eventually, teeth can become loose and may have to be removed.

## **Different forms of periodontitis:**

**Aggressive periodontitis** occurs in patients who are otherwise clinically healthy. Common features include rapid loss of attachment and bone destruction. It may be hereditary.

**Chronic periodontitis** is the most frequently occurring form of periodontitis and is characterized by pocket formation and/or gingival recession. It is prevalent in adults, but can occur at any age. Progression of attachment loss usually occurs slowly, but periods of rapid progression can occur.

## Periodontitis as a manifestation of systemic

**diseases** often begins at a young age. Systemic conditions such as heart disease, respiratory disease, and diabetes are associated with this form of periodontitis.

Giving your gums a little extra love and attention can leave you with a happy, healthy smile. Brush your teeth twice a day, floss regularly and visit a periodontist yearly – your gums will love you for it. W