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## Five Things Your Teeth and Gums Are Telling You About Your Overall Health

Your smile can reflect what's going on inside.

By Deanna deBara | December 11, 2019



They say you can tell a lot about a person by their smile—and that's especially true when it comes to understanding our health on a deeper level. "The health of your teeth and gums can give valuable insight into your overall health," says Dr. Samuel B. Low, D.D.S., M.S., M.Ed. Chief Dental Officer of BIOLASE. "If you are doing everything correctly with your oral health, including frequent dental visits and proper oral hygiene, and are still having issues with your teeth and gums, this is an indication there is something else going on."

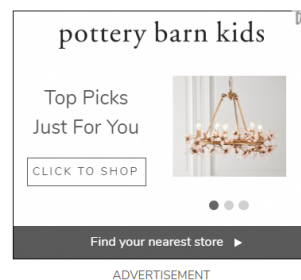


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"Overall, there is a lot going on in the mouth that can affect the body and there is a lot going on in the body that can affect what is going on in the mouth. If any of [the following] symptoms are present, it is important to see an oral health professional who can determine if they are indicative of a larger issue," continues Low. But how, exactly, are your teeth and gums connected to your system as a whole? Ahead, the symptoms to watch out for, including what those symptoms could actually mean beyond the context of your mouth.

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### Bleeding Gums



If you experience bleeding around the gum line when you brush or floss, consider it your mouth's way of telling you to pay attention—and to take better care of your oral hygiene. "Bleeding gums can be a sign of gingivitis or periodontal disease," says Dr. Jason Doublestein of 44 West Dental Professionals in Grandville, Michigan. "Periodontal has been shown to be connected to adverse health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and stroke."

## Receding Gums

Receding gums are another red flag that you're dealing with periodontal disease. "If your gums begin pulling back from your teeth, you may notice that your teeth look elongated or you may notice increased tooth sensitivity," says Dr. Emilia Taneva, DDS, MS, a Chicago-based orthodontist and founder of Bubbly Moments. "This is a symptom of periodontal disease and is often caused by a buildup of hardened plaque."

## White Tissue and Inflammation at the Gum Line

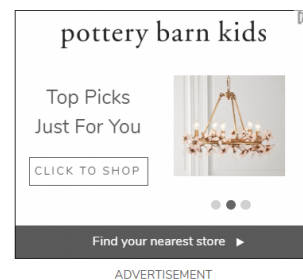
While signs of oral cancer are usually more prominent in other areas of the mouth, the disease can also be spotted along the gumline. "Unhealthy gums also are indicative of oral cancer. The 'hot spots' for oral cancer are on the underside of the tongue and floor of the mouth but can be present on any of the oral tissues—including the gums," says Dr. Doublestein. "The most common appearance for oral cancer is white-ish tissue with a red inflamed ring around it."

## Tooth and Gum Sensitivity

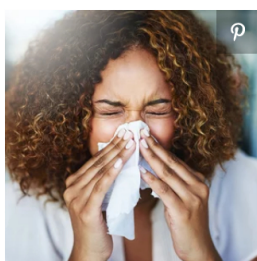
Increased tooth and gum sensitivity can have a variety of causes, but if you've noticed increased sensitivity partnered with a lower quality of sleep, it's time to pay attention. "One cause [of tooth and gum sensitivity] can be nighttime clenching and/or grinding," says Dr. Doublestein. "Clenching and grinding can cause an array of issues such as tooth wear, sensitive teeth, and painful jaw muscles and joints." The potential health risks go beyond just a painful jaw and sensitive teeth. "There is also a correlation between nighttime grinding and sleep apnea, which is a major health concern, having effects on a number of bodily systems as a result of lack of oxygen and poor sleep," Dr. Doublestein adds.

## Pale Gums

Healthy gums should be a vibrant shade of pink. If they have more of a pale (or even white) appearance, it could be a sign that there's something more serious going on elsewhere in the body. "If your gums seem to lose their pink color and appear pale, it may be a sign of anemia," says Dr. Taneva. "This blood disorder occurs when your red blood cell count is low. You may also be experiencing fatigue and dizziness."



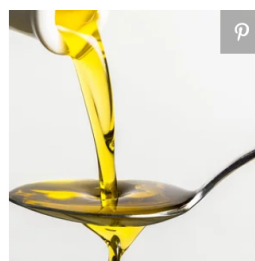
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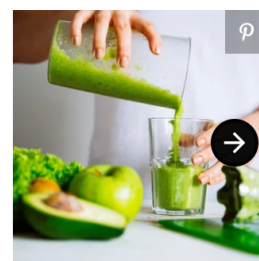
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