Gum disease, also called periodontal disease, is an infection and inflammation of the gums. The gums are the soft tissues that surround your teeth and keep your teeth in place. Prolonged infection can destroy your gums and even bones around your teeth and lead to tooth loss.

Gum disease is a chronic disease that gets worse over time if left untreated. Early in the course of the disease, gum disease is called gingivitis. Gingiva is the soft tissue surrounding the teeth.

What is the relationship between gum disease and diabetes?
Diabetes that is not well controlled increases the risk of gum disease.

Why?
Diabetes weakens the body’s protection against germs. When bacteria live in your mouth for a long time, they create a sticky film, called plaque, on your teeth. Dental plaque is the main cause of gum disease.

Treating gum disease is especially important in people with diabetes, because:
• Gum infection may increase your blood sugar and make it harder to manage your diabetes.
• Diabetes may cause dry mouth, which makes gum disease worse.
• Serious gum disease may lead to tooth loss, which may make it challenging to follow a healthy meal plan.

Overall, gum disease and diabetes have a two-way relationship. Diabetes increases the risk of gum disease, and gum disease, in turn, makes it harder to manage diabetes.

How do I know if I have gum disease?
If you have gingivitis, you may experience one of these symptoms:

- Dark red or swollen gums
- Bad breath
- Gums that are painful to the touch
- Gums that bleed easily

Several factors increase the risk of gum disease. The good news is that you can prevent or control gum disease by changing certain risk factors, including:
• Poor oral hygiene
• Uncontrolled diabetes
• Smoking
• Stress
How can I keep my gums healthy?

Be proactive in the prevention of gum disease by taking these actions:

- **VISIT A DENTIST** regularly.
- **BRUSH** at least twice a day.
- **FLOSS** daily.
- **MANAGE** your diabetes.
- **COPE** with stress.
- **QUIT** smoking.

**Additional Resources**
