

Possible indications that you may have gum disease:

- Gums that bleed easily
- Red, swollen or painful gums
- Continuing bad breath or taste
- Gums that pull away from the teeth
- Trouble chewing
- Teeth becoming loose
- Any change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Any change in the way your partial dentures fit

You can control gum disease by:

- ✓ Brushing your teeth twice a day, to clean every part of every tooth and next to the gum line, after breakfast and at bed time
- ✓ Using dental floss to clean in between your teeth
- ✓ Using mouth-rinses, interdental brushes or toothpicks as recommended by your dental practitioner
- ✓ Visiting your dental practitioner regularly
- ✓ Following the correct techniques for brushing and flossing as recommended by your dental practitioner
- ✓ Quitting smoking
Advice on quitting smoking can be sought through:
Australia Quitline: 137 848 (13 QUIT)
New Zealand Quitline: 0800 778 778
- ✓ Notifying your dental practitioner if you are diagnosed with diabetes
- ✓ Notifying your dental practitioner of other existing medical conditions or medications being taken
- ✓ Eating healthy, regular meals including fresh fruit and vegetables

Your dental practitioner can help you to find what contributes to dental decay and gum disease in your mouth. They will then advise on the steps you can take to control dental decay and gum disease.

Acknowledgement:

Colgate Oral Care

FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES

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ORAL HEALTH OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Information for Patients
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Who are the Indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand?

- Indigenous Australians are people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
- They represent 3% of the Australian population. One in three people in the Northern Territory are Indigenous Australians.
- The people of Māori ethnicity and/or Māori descent are considered as Indigenous New Zealanders.
- They comprise 15% of the New Zealand population. Nearly a quarter of all Māori live in the Auckland (top of the North Island) region.
- Indigenous populations in both Australia and New Zealand are growing faster than non-Indigenous populations, with a higher proportion being aged 20 years or less compared with the non-Indigenous population.

Oral health of Indigenous Australians and Māori New Zealanders

Oral health is a state of being free from two of the most common oral diseases, tooth decay and gum disease, as well as other less prevalent oral diseases such as oral infections and sores, and chronic mouth and facial pain. Keeping good oral health is necessary for overall general health and wellbeing. People with a healthy mouth can eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or embarrassment.

Indigenous people have poorer oral health than non-Indigenous people. For example:

- Indigenous people have more dental decay in both baby and permanent (adult) teeth (Figures 1 and 2).
- Indigenous people have more gum disease (Figure 3).
- Indigenous people have lost more teeth (Figure 4).
- Indigenous people are more likely to report their oral health as poor or fair.



Figure 1. Decayed baby teeth



Figure 2. Decayed permanent teeth



Figure 3. Gum disease



Figure 4. Missing teeth

What is dental decay?

Dental decay is caused by dental plaque, which is a sticky colourless film of bacteria that builds on our teeth. Every time we eat or drink, dental plaque bacteria use sugar and refined carbohydrates to produce acids. These acids attack the tooth and dissolve some tooth minerals. A natural recovery process will usually replace much of the lost tooth mineral. But a cavity or dental decay occurs when the dissolving of tooth minerals is faster than the natural recovery process.

Possible indications that you may have dental decay:

- Toothache
- Discolouration of tooth
- Tooth sensitivity to sweet, hot or cold foods or drinks
- Pain when chewing.
- Toothache

You can control dental decay by:

- ✓ Drinking fluoridated tap water and using it for cooking and making tea or coffee
- ✓ Using toothpaste with fluoride
- ✓ Brushing your teeth twice a day, after breakfast and at bed time
- ✓ Spitting out the toothpaste and not rinsing your mouth after brushing
- ✓ Eating healthy, regular meals
- ✓ Avoiding consuming frequent sweets and sticky snacks
- ✓ Limiting between-meal snacks and replacing them with healthy choices such as fruit, cheese and nuts
- ✓ Substituting soft drinks and sport drinks with water or plain or artificially-sweetened milk drinks
- ✓ Sipping water and chewing sugar-free gum if your mouth feels dry
- ✓ Asking your doctor/pharmacist for sugar-free medications if your children or you are on regular medications
- ✓ Visiting your dental practitioner regularly (once every year)

What is gum disease?

Dental plaque bacteria can irritate the gum line where the necks of teeth meet the gums. This can cause gum disease, an inflammation and infection of the gums. Gum disease can lead to destruction of the tissues and bone that surround and support your teeth. Diabetes, tobacco smoking and emotional stress all contribute to gum disease.