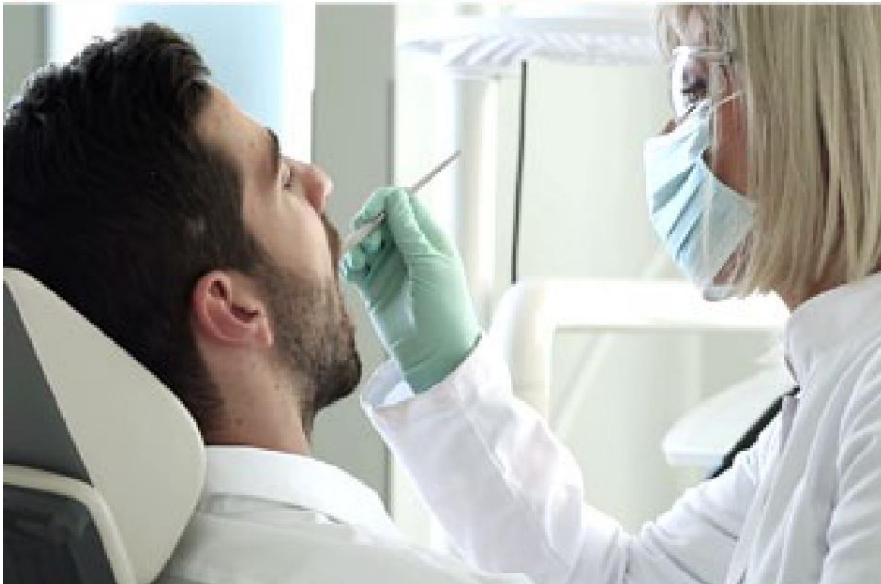## Bleeding Gums

Overview

If your gums bleed, don't ignore it. Bleeding gums can be a sign of major problems with your teeth and gums. It can also be a sign of a serious medical issue.

Causes

Bleeding gums are often caused by poor oral hygiene. If you don't brush and floss properly, plaque builds up on your gum line. Your gums become inflamed. That's a condition we call "gingivitis." It can lead to more advanced disease of the gums and jawbone.

Other Causes

Your gums can bleed for other reasons, too. It can happen if you floss incorrectly or brush too hard. It can happen if you have a bleeding disorder, or if you take blood thinners. Bleeding can be caused by dental appliances that don't fit well. Your gums may bleed during pregnancy. They can bleed because of an infection in your mouth, or because of a vitamin deficiency. And they can bleed because of a cancer of the blood that we call "leukemia."

Treatment

If your bleeding gums are caused by poor oral hygiene, it's time for you to do a better job with your dental care. Make sure you brush and floss every day. Visit your dentist every six months, and follow your dentist's instructions. If you are taking good care of your teeth and gums and your gums still bleed, you may have another problem. Your dentist may need to take x-rays. Your doctor may need to adjust your medications, or do a blood study. Your healthcare provider will know the best way to find the problem and to treat it.