



Receding Gums

Understanding Gum Recession and How to Protect Your Teeth

What Is Gum Recession?

Gum recession occurs when the gum tissue surrounding the teeth gradually pulls away or wears down, exposing more of the tooth or its root.

Because tooth roots are not protected by enamel, exposed roots are more vulnerable to sensitivity, decay, and wear.

Gum recession is common, especially in adults, and often develops gradually over many years.

Why Do Gums Recede?

Gum recession can occur for several reasons.

Common causes include:

- Gum disease (periodontitis)
- Aggressive toothbrushing
- Teeth grinding (bruxism)
- Tobacco use
- Poor oral hygiene
- Thin gum tissue
- Misaligned teeth
- Orthodontic treatment in certain cases
- Piercings that repeatedly rub against the gums

Often, more than one factor contributes.

How Does Gum Disease Cause Recession?

When plaque accumulates along the gumline, bacteria can trigger inflammation.

If gum disease progresses:

- The gums pull away from the teeth.
- Supporting bone may be lost.
- Tooth roots become exposed.

Treating gum disease early can help slow or stop further recession.

Common Symptoms

Many people do not notice gum recession until it becomes more advanced.

Possible signs include:

- Teeth that appear longer than before
- Exposed tooth roots
- Tooth sensitivity
- Notches near the gumline
- Bleeding gums
- Spaces developing between teeth
- Food becoming trapped more easily

Some people have recession without pain.

Why Does Gum Recession Cause Sensitivity?

Unlike the crown of the tooth, the root surface is not covered by enamel.

Instead, it is protected by a much softer material called **cementum**.

When the root becomes exposed, hot, cold, sweet, or acidic foods may trigger sharp, temporary pain.

Can Gum Tissue Grow Back?

In most cases, **receded gums do not grow back naturally.**

However, treatment may:

- Stop further recession
- Reduce sensitivity
- Improve oral health
- Restore gum coverage in selected cases through periodontal surgery

Your dentist or periodontist can determine whether surgical treatment is appropriate.

How Is Gum Recession Diagnosed?

Your dentist will examine:

- Gum position
- Gum health
- Bone support
- Tooth mobility
- Plaque accumulation
- Signs of teeth grinding

Measurements around each tooth help monitor whether recession changes over time.

How Is Gum Recession Treated?

Treatment depends on the underlying cause.

Possible recommendations include:

Improving Oral Hygiene

Removing plaque helps reduce inflammation and slow further recession.

Correcting Brushing Technique

Using a soft-bristled toothbrush and gentle brushing technique helps prevent additional damage.

Treating Gum Disease

Professional periodontal treatment may be necessary when gum disease is present.

Desensitizing Treatments

Fluoride varnishes, bonding materials, or desensitizing toothpaste may reduce discomfort caused by exposed roots.

Gum Grafting

In selected cases, a periodontist may recommend **gum graft surgery** to cover exposed roots and protect the teeth.

Not every patient requires surgery.

Can Gum Recession Be Prevented?

Many cases can be prevented by:

- Brushing gently with a soft toothbrush
- Cleaning between your teeth every day
- Avoiding tobacco products
- Wearing a night guard if you grind your teeth
- Treating gum disease early
- Visiting your dentist regularly

Preventive care is the best way to maintain healthy gums.

When Should You See a Dentist?

Schedule a dental examination if you notice:

- Teeth looking longer

- Exposed roots
- Tooth sensitivity
- Bleeding gums
- Loose teeth
- Changes in the appearance of your gums

Early treatment can often prevent further recession.

Common Myths

"Gum recession is just a normal part of aging."

False.

Although it becomes more common with age, gum recession is often associated with treatable factors such as gum disease or aggressive brushing.

"Brushing harder keeps gums healthier."

False.

Brushing too aggressively may actually contribute to gum recession.

"Receding gums always require surgery."

False.

Many cases can be managed with improved oral hygiene, professional care, and monitoring. Surgery is recommended only in selected situations.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Gum recession exposes the roots of the teeth.
- ✓ Common causes include gum disease, aggressive brushing, and teeth grinding.

- ✓ Exposed roots are more sensitive and more susceptible to decay.
 - ✓ Receded gums usually do not grow back naturally.
 - ✓ Gentle brushing, good oral hygiene, and regular dental care help prevent further recession.
 - ✓ Early diagnosis offers the best opportunity to preserve healthy gums.
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References

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