



# ORAL DISEASE & WOMEN'S HEALTH

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## *Physiological conditions that can lead to oral health problems*

### *Menstruation gingivitis & pregnancy gingivitis*

**T**here are no accurate data on the prevalence of menstruation gingivitis and most females do not notice any changes in their gum condition. This is because when menstruation gingivitis occurs, it is usually mild in 75% of females.

However, some female patients have complained of more severe gum bleeding during menstruation or pregnancy. In fact, some patients can even experience gum swellings that bleed easily to brushing or eating.

Female patients with more "dramatic" gum reactions during menstruation and pregnancy tend to have pre-existing gum disease to start with. Hence, most of these patients can resolve menstruation gingivitis and pregnancy gingivitis with effective gum treatment by a gum specialist.

### *Menopause*

**A**s a woman goes through menopause, her oestrogen levels decline. Since oestrogen is important for absorption of calcium and bone formation, a decrease in oestrogen levels in menopausal women can lead to osteoporosis. This effect of poor calcium absorption and bone formation can sometimes be seen on jawbones. Osteoporotic patients have more severe gum disease that often leads to teeth loss. Other effects of declining oestrogen levels include more severe gum bleeding and dry mouth.

There are ways to prevent or limit the effect of menopause on oral health. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) might be able to slow down the effect of menopause on the oral cavity. Regular dental visits and cleaning can also keep gum disease in check. The dentist or gum specialist will formulate a comprehensive plan to keep the gums healthy and hence prevent the negative effects of menopause on the oral cavity.

## *Medical conditions that may cause oral health problems*

### *Osteoporosis*

**O**steoporosis is commonly seen in post-menopausal women and osteoporosis may be linked to more severe gum disease and tooth loss. The loss of bone mass can sometimes be seen in the jawbone and this can lead to loosening of teeth and ultimately tooth loss.

### *Diabetes*

**D**iabetes is another common medical condition that can lead to more severe gum disease. Usually patients with diabetes have more gum bleeding, receding gums, shaky teeth and tooth loss. Interestingly, when a patient has her diabetes treated well, her gum condition can also improve.

### *Lupus Erythematosus*

**A**nother medical condition commonly affecting women is Lupus Erythematosus, commonly called lupus. Lupus is an autoimmune condition with unknown causes but it can appear as ulcers or swellings in the gum.

Many medical conditions or even physiological ones can show up in the oral cavity. Hence, your dentist can help in picking up signs of possible underlying medical conditions.

Due to the possible link between gum disease and women's health status, it is advisable for women to see a gum specialist on a regular basis.