

# Mississauga Dental Specialists

*Braces Invisalign Teeth Gums & Implants*

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## Gum Recession

Gingival recession (receding gums) refers to the progressive loss of gum tissue, which can eventually result in tooth root exposure if left untreated. Gum recession is most common in adults over the age of 40, but the process can begin in the teenage years.

Gum recession can be difficult to self-diagnose in its earlier stages because the changes often occur asymptotically and gradually. Regular dental check-ups will help to prevent gum recession and assess risk factors.

**There are several symptoms of gum recession, including:**

- **Sensitive teeth** – When the gums recede enough to expose the cementum protecting the tooth root, the dentin tubules beneath will become more susceptible to external stimuli.
- **Visible roots** – This is one of the main characteristics of a more severe case of gum recession.
- **Longer-looking teeth** – Individuals experiencing gingival recession often have a “toothy” smile. The length of the teeth is perfectly normal, but the gum tissue has been lost, making the teeth appear longer.
- **Halitosis, inflammation, and bleeding** – These symptoms are characteristic of gingivitis or periodontal disease. A bacterial infection causes the gums to recede from the teeth and may cause tooth loss if not treated promptly.

## Causes of Gum Recession

Gum recession is an incredibly widespread problem that dentists diagnose and treat on a daily basis. It is important to thoroughly examine the affected areas and make an accurate diagnosis of the actual underlying problem. Once the cause of the gum recession has been determined, surgical and non-surgical procedures can be performed to halt the progress of the recession and prevent it from occurring in the future.

### **The most common causes of gingival recession are:**

- **Overaggressive brushing** – Over-brushing can almost be as dangerous to the gums as too little. Brushing too hard or brushing with a hard-bristled toothbrush can erode the tooth enamel at the gum line and irritate/inflame gum tissue.
- **Poor oral hygiene** – When brushing and flossing are performed improperly or not at all, a plaque buildup can begin to affect the teeth. The plaque contains various bacterial toxins which can promote infection and erode the underlying jawbone.
- **Chewing tobacco** – Any kind of tobacco use has devastating effects on the entire oral cavity, chewing tobacco in particular. It aggravates the gingival lining of the mouth and causes gum recession when used continuously.
- **Periodontal disease** – Periodontal disease can be a result of improper oral hygiene or caused by systemic diseases such as diabetes. The excess sugars in the mouth and narrowed blood vessels experienced by diabetics create a perfect environment for oral bacteria. The bacterium causes an infection which progresses deeper and deeper into the gum and bone tissue, eventually resulting in tooth loss.

### **Treatment of Gum Recession**

Every case of gum recession is slightly different, therefore many treatments are available. The nature of the problem which caused the recession to begin with needs to be addressed first.

If overly aggressive brushing techniques are eroding the gums, a softer toothbrush and a gentler brushing technique should be used. If poor oral hygiene is a problem, prophylaxis (professional dental cleaning) may be recommended to rid the gum pockets of debris and bacteria. In the case of a severe calculus (tartar) build-up, scaling and root planing will be performed to heal gingival inflammation and clean the teeth.

Once the cause of the gingival recession has been addressed, surgery of a more cosmetic or restorative nature might be recommended. Gum tissue regeneration and gum grafting are two excellent ways to restore natural symmetry to the gums and make the smile look more aesthetically pleasing.

***If you have any questions or concerns about periodontal disease, periodontal treatments, or gum recession, please contact our office.***