

SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

If your gums are red and puffy, that probably is not a good sign. The swelling of gums is a symptom of gum disease which down the road, may lead to tooth loss. If your gums hurt throughout the day or bleed when you brush, it could be a sign of oral cancer.

Here are some ways to treat these symptoms according to the medical website Web MD:

- Use tartar-control toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- Use an antiseptic mouthwash, such as Listerine, or an anti-plaque mouthwash.
- Chew sugar-free gum after meals if you are unable to brush your teeth.



Good - The pink color = healthy gums



Bad - Red and puffy= gum disease

Oral cancer is another condition that could leave teeth in its dust. This cancer starts with a single white spot anywhere in the mouth and can affect any area of the mouth, not just the teeth and gums. Smoking greatly increases the chance of developing oral cancer as does alcohol use. Oral cancer is usually diagnosed in people aged 40 and up. However, there has been an increase in patients under 40 having the cancer.

Just like gum disease, oral cancer can sometimes be avoided by routine visits to the dentist, proper brushing of the teeth twice a day, and flossing daily.

For smokers and spit tobacco users, these products double your chances of getting gum disease or oral cancer because tobacco decreases the body's ability to fight back and slows the healing process.

