



Why Brushing Harder Does Not Always Mean Brushing Better

Are your teeth sensitive to sweet, sour, spicy, hot or cold foods? Do your teeth look longer than they used to or seem to have more space between them?

Your gums may be receding from your teeth, causing more of your teeth to show, possibly even exposing the roots of the teeth.

Why does this happen?

There are several factors that could lead to gum recession, including:

- Malformed teeth
- Brushing too hard or using a hard-bristled toothbrush
- Heredity—you may have inherited thin, fragile gum tissue from your family
- Smokeless tobacco
- Foreign objects in the mouth, such as piercings, pipes, or chewing on pens

Gum recession could also be caused by periodontal disease. There are two forms: gingivitis, a condition where the gums become red and inflamed, and periodontitis, an infection that spreads from the gums to the bone that supports teeth. Symptoms of periodontal disease can include: bad breath; red, swollen or tender gums; bleeding while brushing or flossing; gums that pull away from teeth; loose teeth; or spaces between the teeth getting bigger.

Can this lead to other problems?

Yes, gum recession can lead to advanced periodontal disease, giving the bacteria a chance to build up in deeper pockets formed around the tooth and lead to further infection. This can eventually lead to tooth loss.

That's why it is important to speak with your dentist about any signs of receding gums or symptoms you may have. If it is solely a toothbrushing issue, your dentist may recommend a softer toothbrush and gentle, circular strokes around the gumline.

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.