White stuff on gums? [1]

Dear Alice,

When I wake up in the morning, I have a layer of stringy white stuff lining my bottom gums. Can you help me identify this?

Answer

Dear Reader,

The ?stringy white stuff? that you?re referring to sounds like a buildup of plaque and tarter — generally considered to feel ?furry? and like a sticky film over your teeth. Excess plaque can cause halitosis [2] (bad breath), gum disease, or tooth decay. To wake up with a ?fresher? and healthier mouth, you may need to pay a little closer attention to your brushing habits at night and try mouthwash or flossing.

Good brushing habits include brushing your teeth at least twice a day, holding your toothbrush at a slight angle to reach your back teeth, and replacing your toothbrush periodically. Don?t skimp. Remember, protection against cavities is mainly provided by toothpaste that has small amounts of fluoride [3] in it so be sure to use enough. You may need to use floss [4] or tongue scraping [5] to ensure you reach all areas of your mouth and remove any leftover food. A fluoride or antiseptic mouthwash is also a good idea in your quest for proper oral hygiene.

Without good brushing habits, and with frequent ingestion of sugary foods, built-up plaque can harden to form tartar, creating favorable conditions for more bacteria to grow. When bacteria get caught in the pockets between your gums and your teeth, gingivitis (a gum infection) and the more serious periodontics infection can occur. Symptoms of periodontitis include bad breath, red, shiny, or tender gums, gums that bleed easily, or loose teeth.

So? if your symptoms persist, you should definitely visit a dentist; it?s recommended you go every six months for a professional removal of dental plaque and tarter, and a thorough cleaning and polishing. Oral hygiene is important; don?t forget to take care of your loudest feature!

Alice!
Category: General Health [6]
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