

# ORAL HEALTH MONTH ALERT

## Could Your Contraceptive be Affecting Your Smile?



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September is Oral Health Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the vital connection between oral health and overall wellbeing. As we also approach World Contraception Day on September 26th, it is an opportune moment to shed light on a lesser-known but important health issue: the impact of hormonal contraceptives on gum health. Many women are unaware that their chosen method of birth control can influence their oral cavity, potentially increasing the risk of gum disease, including gingivitis and periodontitis.

Hormonal contraceptives, including oral pills, implants, injections, and hormonal intrauterine device(IUD) s, work by releasing synthetic versions of hormones like progesterone and oestrogen. While these hormones regulate fertility, they also affect other parts of the body, including the gums. They increase blood flow to gum tissue and alter the body's inflammatory response to the toxins produced by dental plaque. As a result, gums can become more sensitive, swollen, and prone to bleeding. This reaction mimics a condition known as pregnancy gingivitis, which occurs due to similar hormonal fluctuations.

When gum tissues are in this sensitized state, they are more vulnerable to plaque and tartar buildup. If not managed, this can lead to gingivitis - characterized by red, inflamed gums that bleed easily. Without timely care, gingivitis can progress to periodontitis, a more severe and irreversible form of gum disease that damages the bone and connective tissue supporting the teeth. In women using hormonal contraceptives, this progression can be faster, increasing the risk of long-term oral health complications such as gum recession, bone loss, and even tooth loss.



The encouraging news is that this risk can be effectively managed. The key lies in proactive prevention:

- Always inform your dentist if you are using hormonal contraceptives so they can tailor your care.
- Maintain strict daily oral hygiene—brushing twice a day and flossing to control plaque buildup.
- Never skip your routine dental check-ups and professional cleanings, as they are essential for removing tartar and monitoring gum health.

By recognizing the link between contraceptive use and gum health, women can take meaningful steps to protect their smiles while safeguarding their reproductive choices. This Oral Health Month, let us remember that a healthy mouth is central to a healthy body—and that small steps in prevention can have lifelong benefits.

## References

1. American Academy of Periodontology. (2022). Gum Disease and Women. [online] Available at: <https://www.perio.org/for-patients/gum-disease-information/gum-disease-and-women/> [Accessed 19 August 2025].
2. American Dental Association. (2023). Hormones and Dental Health. [online] Available at: <https://www.ada.org/en/resources/research/science-and-research-institute/oral-health-topics/hormones-and-dental-health> [Accessed 19 August 2025].