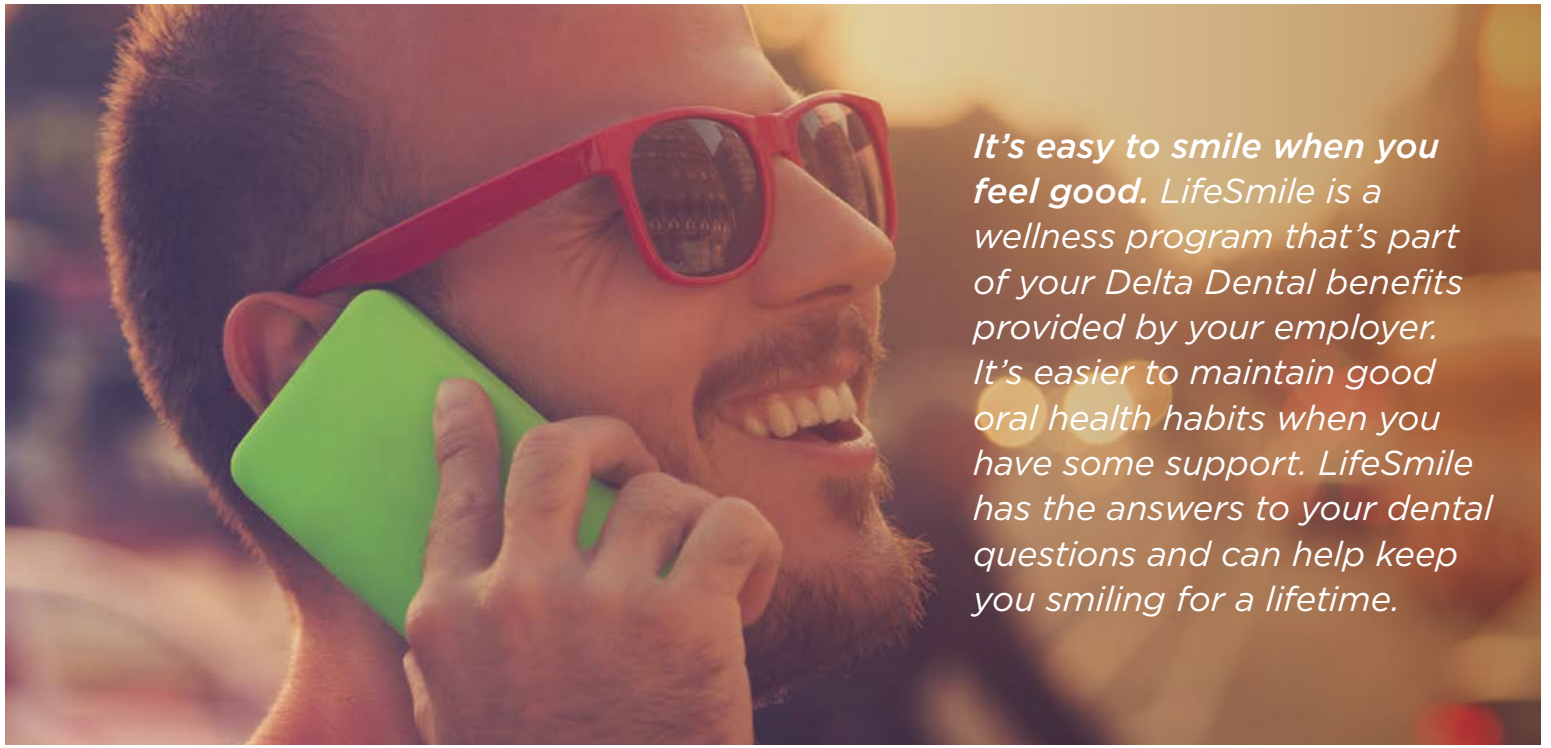


# HEALTHY GUMS FOR HEALTHY SMILES

Gum disease is a chronic bacterial infection that affects gums and bone supporting the teeth. Major risk factors for gum disease are poor dental hygiene and smoking. Diabetes, unhealthy diet and stress can also increase your chance of developing gum disease.





*It's easy to smile when you feel good. LifeSmile is a wellness program that's part of your Delta Dental benefits provided by your employer. It's easier to maintain good oral health habits when you have some support. LifeSmile has the answers to your dental questions and can help keep you smiling for a lifetime.*

## What You Need to Know About Gum Disease:

- In early gum disease, called gingivitis, your gums may be red, swollen and bleeding. At this stage, the condition is still usually reversible when treated with daily brushing and flossing, as well as regular dental cleanings.
- In later-stage disease, called periodontitis, your gums may be seriously damaged and begin to pull away from the teeth. You may also lose supporting bone. This stage of the disease may require surgical treatment and is not reversible.
- The first line of defense against gum disease is good oral care. Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, paying special attention to the gum line, and floss once a day.
- Also important: Avoid smoking.
- Finally, see your dentist regularly to have your teeth cleaned and checked.

## When Your Gums Recede

Periodontal disease is by far the most serious cause of gum recession. If gum recession leaves the roots of your teeth exposed, your teeth may become more sensitive to hot, cold, sweet or sour foods and drinks. Your dentist may recommend using a soft toothbrush, special toothpaste, or a fluoride rinse. Here are some smart ways to help minimize the effects of periodontal disease:

- Brush your teeth gently, at least twice a day, with special attention to the gum line. Use a fluoride toothpaste.
- Replace your toothbrush every three or four months or sooner if the bristles begin to fray.
- Floss at least once a day. Your teeth aren't truly clean until they're brushed and flossed.
- Visit the dentist routinely for a check-up and professional cleaning.
- Your dentist will check for gum disease and, if you do have it, will recommend a treatment plan to follow at home.
- Eat a nutritious diet, avoid sugary drinks and snacks, and snack wisely.
- Avoid smoking and all tobacco products.

**Healthy Smile, Happy Life:** Help prevent disease and stay on the path toward a healthier, happier life with LifeSmile from Delta Dental. Take advantage of numerous free resources for improving your oral health at [oralhealth.deltadental.com](http://oralhealth.deltadental.com).