

# Almost half of U.S. adults have gum disease

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Rate is even higher for seniors, study finds.

(HealthDay)—Gum disease affects nearly half of American adults aged 30 and older, a new study finds.

The study was published Aug. 30 in the [Journal of Dental Research](#).

[Periodontitis](#) is an infection of the gums and a major cause of tooth loss in adults, according to the [American Dental Association](#).

For the new study, researchers analyzed data from a nationally representative study on more than 3,700 adults aged 30 and older and found that about 47 percent had periodontitis—about 9 percent with mild [gum disease](#), 30 percent with moderate disease and 8.5 percent with severe disease.

The 47 percent rate would mean that nearly 65 million adults in the United States have gum disease, according to a journal news release.

The researchers also found that 64 percent of adults 65 and older in the study had either moderate or severe periodontitis. This rate is far higher than previous national estimates, according to study lead author Paul Eke, of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and colleagues.

Gum disease rates were highest in males, Mexican Americans, adults with less than a [high school education](#), adults below the poverty line and current smokers.

Although it's usually painless, warning signs include gums that bleed easily or are red, swollen and tender, according to the American Dental Association website. Other signs are gums that have pulled away from the teeth or chronic bad breath or bad taste.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institutes of Health explains how to [prevent gum disease](#).

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