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of Haemophilia Foundation
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BY VICTORIA BUGEMBE
NAMPALA

Mulungi Amina woke up to get ready for school as usual. While brushing her teeth, she felt a sharp pain around her gums and within minutes, they became swollen, with a slight ooze of blood. The sight startled her. She rinsed quickly, hoping it would stop, but the tenderness lingered.

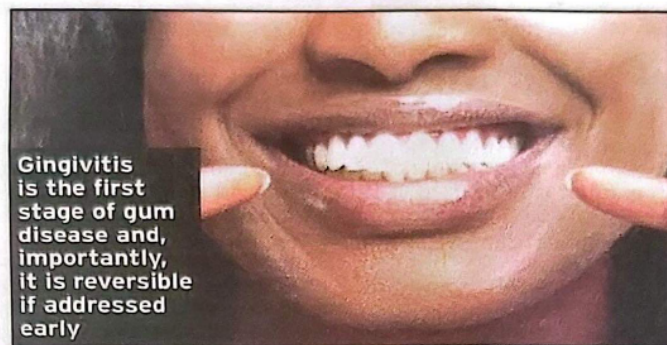
She skipped breakfast because of the pain and decided to calm herself before heading to school. As the day went on, the discomfort seemed to ease and she convinced herself it was nothing serious.

But over the next week, the bleeding returned more often, and her gums began to look

red and puffy. Sometimes they felt sore even when she was not eating. What she did not yet realise was that she was stepping into one of the most common, yet underestimated health conditions in the world: Gum disease.

GINGIVITIS

According to Ssemakula Allan, a dentist at Mulago Dental Ward, gingivitis is the first stage of gum disease and, importantly, it is reversible if addressed early. He explains that the condition often begins quietly, without severe pain, which makes it easy for many people to ignore until it worsens. "Gingivitis starts with plaque, a sticky film of bacteria that forms on the teeth



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when oral hygiene is poor," Ssemakula says.

This irritation leads to inflammation, causing the gums to become red, swollen, tender and prone to bleeding, especially during brushing

or eating. These are the early signs many people overlook.

Globally, studies estimate that nearly 4 in 10 adults over the age of 30 have some level of periodontitis, the more advanced form of gum disease.

Gingivitis, which comes before it, is even more common but often goes unnoticed because it may not cause significant pain in its early stages.

According to Alex Ndikumwami of Wana Dental Clinic, inadequate brushing and flossing are the leading causes of plaque accumulation, which in turn leads to gingivitis. He explains that when plaque is not removed daily, it hardens into tartar, which cannot be removed by brushing alone.

TREATMENT

There is a professional dental cleaning to remove hardened plaque, known as tartar. Once plaque has stayed on the teeth for several days, it calcifies

and cannot be removed by a toothbrush alone. The cleaning procedure, though slightly uncomfortable, marks the first step towards recovery.

After that comes the daily routine. Dentists advise brushing teeth thoroughly twice a day using the correct technique, paying close attention to the gumline. Flossing is equally important to remove food particles and plaque from between the teeth.

Ndikumwami notes that gums may still bleed during brushing in the early days of treatment. However, this is often temporary as the gums begin to heal and inflammation reduces. Gradually, the swelling subsides, the redness fades and the bleeding becomes less frequent.

Over time, the gums return to a healthy state — firm, pink and no longer painful.