

**G** – GUEST ARTICLES

# In the Pink: Zapping Away Dark Gum Splotches with Lasers

BY CREDIHEALTH TEAM · ⌚ 3 MINUTE READ

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When you picture a beautiful smile, you normally envision healthy, white teeth. But the gums that support your teeth should also be taken into consideration. Some individuals with inconsistent or varied gum coloration may have aesthetic concerns about their smiles despite a mouthful of lovely teeth. These people have a condition called gingival (gum) hyperpigmentation.

## What is Gingival Hyperpigmentation?

The color of gum tissue can actually be as varied as our skin tones. Sometimes individuals have black or brown skin splotches on their gum tissue, which is caused by excess melanin. While normally not of a health concern, this condition may cause individuals to feel less confident about their smiles.

## Causes of Gum Hyperpigmentation

While gingival hyperpigmentation is normally benign and more common in dark-skinned individuals, it can occur in any ethnicity. Dark spots on the gums can also be caused by tobacco usage (smoking or chewing). Following tobacco use cessation, the gums will normally lighten. Other causes of gingival hyperpigmentation can include:

- Side effects of certain medications, such as minocycline, a tetracycline antibiotic
- Addison's disease (an endocrine disorder)
- Genetic predisposition
- Ulcerative gingivitis
- Amalgam "tattoo" (when a silver filling leaches into the gum tissues)

**Before:**



**After:**



## Laser Surgery Gum (Gingival) Depigmentation for Long-Term Results

Today's safest and most effective treatment to target gum hyperpigmentation is via laser gum lightening, a procedure that produces great results and is less traumatic than other procedures (scalpel surgery, for instance). While other bleaching procedures simply remove the superficial cells that cause discoloration, laser gum depigmentation removes the actual melanocytes, the skin cells that contain and produce the melanin pigment that causes discoloration. The advantage of this is that these cells do not multiply often and once being removed the result will be very long lasting.

Our practice's experience matches that of many other [clinical studies](#) that show that laser treatment for gum hyperpigmentation results in gingiva (gum) hues that match the original non-pigmented gingiva. In many instances, only the maxillary (top) dental arch is treated since the mandibular (bottom) arch isn't often visible when smiling.

## Are You a Candidate for Laser Gum Depigmentation?

Individuals who have healthy smiles but are unhappy with the color of their gum tissue can consider laser gum lightening. Those who have had issues with gum disease will most likely require antibiotics to ensure there is no infection present. The procedure is virtually pain-free. Most individuals, in fact, can return to normal activities after treatment, with a full healing process usually complete within two weeks. Results can last a lifetime.

## Case History Example Before and After:

*The thirty-two-year-old female was treated with the Millenium MVP-7 laser. Two weeks post-op the hue of her gingiva closely matches the original non-pigmented gingiva. Long-term results arachieved with the removal of melanocytes in the basal lamina without affecting any valuable soft and hard tissue.*

