

# FOCUS

ON DENTAL HYGIENE

## 5 RISKS YOU MIGHT BE TAKING WITH YOUR DENTAL CARE ROUTINE

In some respects, your dental health is like the engine in your car. Neglect the engine and eventually your car won't run. Neglect your oral care, and it could lead to illness and disease as vital systems in your body are impacted. Growing scientific evidence supports the mouth-body connection and why proper oral care is so important to your overall health.

**Here are 5 reasons to keep your teeth and gums in mint condition:**

### 1. Risk of heart disease

Be heart smart. According to the American Heart Association, periodontal infections are linked to heart disease — the leading cause of death in the U.S. Gum disease is caused by plaque buildup and affects 75 percent of American adults. Here's how it affects your ticker: When bacteria from infected gums dislodges, it can enter the bloodstream, attach to blood vessels and increase clot formations. Clots decrease the blood supply flow to the heart and can increase your chances of, you guessed it, a heart attack.

### 2. Danger of diabetes

Nothing's sweet about this connection. As we've mentioned, poor oral care can cause bacteria to enter the bloodstream. This can activate our immune cells. These activated cells produce inflammatory biological signals called cytokines that have a destructive effect throughout the entire body. In the pancreas, the cells responsible for insulin production can be damaged or destroyed by the chronic high levels of cytokines. Once this happens, watch out. It may induce Type 2 diabetes — even in otherwise healthy individuals with no other risk factors for diabetes.

### 3. Cancer threat for men?

Research published recently in *The Lancet Oncology*, a leading general medical journal, found that men with a history of gum disease are 14 percent

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more likely to develop cancer than men with healthy gums. In fact, researchers uncovered that men with periodontal disease may be:

- 49 percent more likely to develop kidney cancer.
- 54 percent more likely to develop pancreatic cancer.
- 30 percent more likely to develop blood cancers.

“Previous research has suggested a potential link between gum disease and other conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis,” says Dr. Susan Karabin, President of the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP). “This study should prompt men to be particularly mindful of their teeth and gums now that gum disease may play a role in the onset of cancer.”

#### 4. Chronic bad breath

People shying away from you? Periodontal disease is a leading cause of bad breath. Advanced forms of periodontal disease typically result in serious damage to the bone that holds your teeth in place. As this bone damage occurs, deep spaces form between the teeth and gums. These pockets provide an ideal location for bacteria. In many cases it is waste products coming from the bacteria that reside in these periodontal pockets — pockets which are often so deep that a person cannot effectively cleanse them. This is the cause of a person’s bad breath.

#### 5. Your teeth *are* your smile

Let’s get back to where this all started: In your mouth. Gum disease is a widespread problem that is associated with swelling, bleeding, pain, redness of the gums — and the eventual loss of teeth. We all want a healthy smile, yet gum disease, a sign of oral neglect, is the most prevalent disease Americans suffer from. And it doesn’t discriminate. While the risks grow as we grow older, people from all ages are afflicted. And the worse part? It’s entirely preventable!

Make a lasting commitment to brighten your smile, freshen your breath and promote the healthiest smile possible. You owe it to yourself!

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