

FOCUS

ON DENTAL HYGIENE

THE MOUTH-BODY CONNECTION: HEALTHY SMILES SUPPORT HEALTHY BODIES

When you've got the daily dental hygiene basics down, you've got a great foundation for a beautiful, healthy smile. October is National Dental Hygiene Month — the perfect time for you to make a lifetime commitment to your dental health. Maintaining a million-dollar smile is not just about looking great and helping to prevent bad breath and cavities. Growing scientific evidence shows that neglecting your smile could lead to serious health issues as well.

5 reasons you need to take care of your smile

1. Protect against heart disease

According to the American Heart Association, dental infections are linked to heart disease — the leading cause of death in North America. What you may not know is that gum disease is caused by plaque buildup and affects an alarming 75 percent of adults. How does that affect your heart health? When bacteria from infected gums dislodge, it can enter the bloodstream, attach to blood vessels and increase clot formations. These clots decrease the blood supply flow to the heart and can increase your chances of a heart attack.

2. Lower your risk for diabetes

If we neglect proper dental care, bacteria that enters the bloodstream can activate our immune cells. These activated cells produce inflammatory biological signals that have a destructive effect throughout the entire body. In the pancreas, the cells responsible for insulin production can be damaged or destroyed. Once this happens, you could face serious consequences, including Type 2 diabetes — even in otherwise healthy individuals with no other risk factors for diabetes.

3. Reduce the threat of respiratory disease

Scientists have found that bacteria growing in the oral cavity can be secreted into the lungs and cause respiratory diseases such as pneumonia, especially in people with periodontal disease. This discovery leads researchers to believe that these respiratory bacteria can travel from the oral cavity into the lungs to cause infection. Further damage to the tissue and working function of the lungs can be prevented by eliminating oral bacteria through proper dental care. But already damaged tissue cannot be restored.

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4. Protect against osteoporosis

Researchers at the University of Buffalo reported that people diagnosed with periodontal disease may be at a higher risk of underlying osteoporosis. The study, published in the *Journal of Periodontology*, is the first large-scale assessment of the relationship between bone metabolism and oral health. The results indicate a very strong relationship between the advanced form of gum disease — which causes bone loss, gum-attachment loss, tooth loss — and osteoporosis.

5. Support a healthy social life!

The old saying is true: You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Studies show that an attractive smile is one of the first things people notice about you. We all want a healthy smile, yet dental 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 age, people from all ages are afflicted. And the most ironic part? Dental disease entirely preventable by following a good dental hygiene program!

Closing thoughts

Celebrate National Dental Hygiene Month by making a commitment to brighten your smile, freshen your breath and promote the healthiest smile possible. It all starts by implementing a daily home dental regimen and sticking to it. You can start by discovering the Oxyfresh difference. We have earned a reputation for excellence with dental hygiene products.

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