

## Dental Health

Did you know that your dental health can offer clues about your overall health? Also, that problems in your mouth can affect the rest of your body?

### Disease and Conditions Linked to Dental Health

- **Endocarditis.** Endocarditis is a very serious infection that can effect the inner lining of your heart chambers or valves. Endocarditis typically occurs when bacteria or other germs spread through your bloodstream and attach to the heart. One way the bacteria or germs can enter the body is through a cut or sore in the mouth.
- **Heart Disease.** While the connection between heart disease and poor dental health is not fully understood, research suggests that heart disease, clogged arteries and stroke might be linked to the inflammation and infections that oral bacteria can cause.
- **Periodontitis.** Periodontitis is a serious gum infection that damages the soft tissue and can destroy the bone that supports your teeth. Additionally, periodontitis can cause teeth to loosen or lead to tooth loss.
- **Pneumonia.** Bacteria in your mouth can be pulled into your lungs, causing pneumonia and other respiratory diseases.
- **Diabetes.** Gum disease appears to be more frequent and severe amongst people who have diabetes. In fact, research has shown that people who have gum disease have a harder time controlling their blood sugar levels.
- **Osteoporosis.** Osteoporosis is a bone weakening disease that is linked with periodontal bone loss and tooth loss.
- **Gingivitis.** Gingivitis is the inflammation of the gums and is usually the result of plaque build-up on your teeth. Untreated gingivitis can lead to periodontitis.



- **Pregnancy.** During pregnancy, there is a spike in progesterone and other hormones that can upset your body's normal balance. The spike in hormones can result in gingivitis, too little or too much saliva, or benign tumor-like growths called granulomas. Additionally, frequent vomiting caused by morning sickness can cause tooth decay by dissolving your tooth enamel.

### **Bad Dental Habits to Stop Today**

- **Using Your Teeth as Tools.** While it may be tempting to use your mouth to tear open a package, it will eventually cause your teeth to crack or break.
- **Biting Your Nails.** Biting your nails can lead to cracked and broken teeth and cause you to become ill from germs and bacteria.
- **Frequent Snacking.** Snacking and drinking sugary drinks throughout the day greatly increases your chances of developing tooth decay. Frequent snacking can lead to harmful bacteria lingering on your teeth, leading to the need for dental treatments.

### **Preventing Poor Dental Health**

- **Start With a Mouthwash Before Brushing.** Using a mouthwash before brushing can wash away bacteria that can cause disease and cavities.
- **Floss Second.** Flossing after using mouthwash and before brushing allows your toothbrush to reach between the teeth.
- **Brush at least twice a day.** Brushing a minimum of twice a day with an electric toothbrush has proven to be more efficient at removing plaque. Also, spit but don't rinse when you are finished brushing your teeth. Rinsing washes away the benefits of applying fluoride to your teeth.
- **Scrape your tongue.** The tongue is made up of lots of little crypts which can harbor bacteria and debris. If you don't regularly scrape your tongue, a coating can form on your tongue and cause bad breath.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475>

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