

WORD OF MOUTH:

What your teeth may be telling you

“What does my mouth have to do with my overall health?” you might ask ...

Well, more than you might have imagined ...



Oral health, which includes your mouth, teeth and gums, can be an indicator or an actual sign of other health problems (or a warning of what’s to come). From chronic conditions to lesser-known connections to oral health, here are some of the ways your mouth may be sending you messages.



A little bit about bacteria

We know our mouths are hubs for bacteria – largely the good kind – but because the mouth serves as the gateway to the digestive and respiratory systems, striking that “good balance” of bacteria is key. So too much bad bacteria built up in the mouth can cause a whole host of issues – including oral infections, periodontitis (gum disease) and/or tooth decay. No fun.

How can we prevent the bad guys from taking over? Keep up with the basics:



Brush at least twice a day



Floss daily



Eat well – plenty of fruits and vegetables



Use mouthwash with fluoride



Check in with the dentist twice per year at minimum



Oral health connections

Some health issues have true connections to oral health, and in some cases, one actually influences the other.

Mental health issues

Depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders have a connection to dental diseases. Losing interest in self-care and daily hygiene can result in more cavities and gum disease.

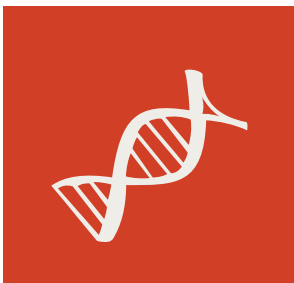


Osteoporosis

Defined by bone loss and bone-weakening, this disease has been commonly linked to bone loss of the jaw, as well as tooth loss.

Diabetes

If you've been diagnosed with diabetes or have a hard time controlling your glucose levels, you're at greater risk for gum (periodontal) disease. Diabetes puts you at higher risk for gum and bone infections, which can lead to tooth loss, persistent bad breath, problems chewing and interference with gum healing (even when treated).



Immune-related conditions

Autoimmune disorders like Lupus, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Celiac disease, as well as some cancers and HIV/AIDS which can cause compromised immunity, may make it harder to fight off infection (like too much bad bacteria in your mouth).



When oral health goes south

Body organs and systems can be impacted by less-than-optimal oral health.



Coronary arterial disease

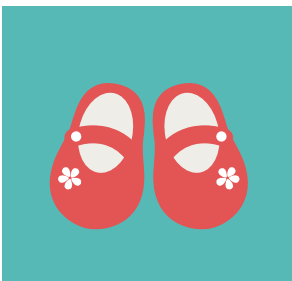
Clogged arteries have been closely linked to tooth loss and gum disease.

Heart infections (or endocarditis)

Bacteria from your mouth travels through your bloodstream and lands inside the lining of the heart, which can negatively affect heart valves. If you needed yet another reason to pick up that floss every night, cardiovascular disease and clogged arteries have been linked to the “inflammation and infections” caused by oral bacteria.

Pneumonia

Similar to the way bacteria can travel to your heart, germs from your mouth can also land in your lungs and cause pneumonia or other respiratory illnesses.



At-risk pregnancy

If you have a history of gum disease, keep in mind the risks of low birth weight or premature birth, and talk to your doctor and dentist about these potential complications.



An added precaution

If you have an existing heart, lung or other health condition, you may benefit from an additional step before your next teeth cleaning. Taking a course or dose of antibiotics (as prescribed by your doctor) before a dental visit may offer an added layer of precaution that can help prevent unwanted infections.

Don't forget your furry family members



Good oral hygiene is good for your pets as well. Stay on top of their health with annual visits and regular teeth cleaning, if necessary.

CLICK THE LINK TO TAKE A SHORT QUIZ TO PROVE COMPLETION:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/T6YYKS7>