

# Beyond Tooth Decay: Why Good Dental Hygiene Is Important



Your teeth are important, without them you'll find it difficult to chew up your food and eat a balanced and nutritious diet. Unfortunately, you lose your first set when you're very young, that means your adult teeth need to last you for decades. Fortunately, they can last with the right care and attention.

Poor dental hygiene leads to tooth decay, this can ultimately lead to tooth loss. But, did you know that the health of your mouth and teeth is actually connected to your overall health?

## **Good Hygiene Practice**

Good dental hygiene means brushing for 2 minutes every morning and evening. You also need to floss daily and visit a dentist 1-2 times a year. This will help to ensure any issue is caught early and dealt with.

The simple fact is that many of the foods you eat are full of sugars and other chemicals. These sit in your mouth and provide bacteria in your mouth with food, the by-product of this is an acid which is capable of dissolving the enamel on your teeth. Once this is gone bacteria can enter into the softer inner part of your teeth and cause damage that ultimately results in tooth loss.

Brushing and flossing help to remove the bacteria and plaque which causes these issues, effectively protecting your teeth.

**Top Tip: When visiting a dentist choose one that practices** holistic dentistry as they will consider

what effect dental procedures have on your whole health before acting.

## **Other Health-Related Issues**

But, it's not just about what can happen to your teeth. Poor dental hygiene can lead to a variety of other health issues:

### **Heart Disease**

Recent studies suggest that gum disease in a moderate or advanced stage increases your risk of heart disease. This is because the blood vessels in the mouth are very close to the teeth and will carry harmful bacteria from your gums to your heart.

Of course, there are other risk factors but this link does demonstrate the increased risk of heart disease through undiagnosed advanced gum disease.

### **Alzheimer's**

The process of gradually losing your own mind is hard for those with Alzheimer's and those caring for them. Although research is ongoing, there is no definitive cure. But, there is an increased understanding of the risk factors involved.

Recent studies have shown that poor oral hygiene can actually increase the risk of Alzheimer's developing.

The research found bacteria called *Porphyromonas gingivalis* within the brains of Alzheimer's patients, this is the bacteria associated with gum disease.

It is believed that poor oral hygiene leads to invasive dental treatments which then allows bacteria to enter the bloodstream near the teeth. This is then transported to the brain where the immune response will kill the bacteria. Unfortunately, the immune response system can also damage brain cells causing confusion and memory loss; classic symptoms of Alzheimer's.

### **Pancreatic Cancer**

Cancer kills millions of people every year and the causes are still being investigated. But, it would appear that poor oral hygiene will increase the likelihood of you contracting pancreatic cancer.

The research suggests that men with a history of gum disease have a 64% higher chance of contracting pancreatic cancer than those without gum disease.

It is worth noting that more research is needed to confirm this, especially as pancreatic cancer is usually difficult to diagnose until it is quite advanced.

The link with pancreatic cancer only applies to periodontitis, which is the gum disease that affects the tissue supporting the teeth and can cause bone loss. Gingivitis, where the tissue around the teeth is inflamed, does

not appear to increase the risk of pancreatic cancer.

If you haven't seen your dentist recently, it's time to make an appointment.