

# Healthy Smile, Healthy You

## The Importance of Regular Dental Care

*You may have heard of the mind-body connection, but have you heard of the mouth-body connection? Beyond giving you a beautiful smile, fresh breath, and a self-esteem boost, regular dental care is a vital part of your overall health and wellness.*

### The Mouth-Body Connection

The No. 1 thing dental care works to prevent is gum disease. Early symptoms of gum disease include swollen, tender gums that bleed easily when you brush or floss. Bleeding gums don't seem like a big deal, but if left untreated, gum disease can eat away at the underlying tissue and bone structure that holds your teeth in place.

Gum disease is also connected to several other serious conditions including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's disease, and rheumatoid arthritis. Researchers don't exactly know why these issues often appear hand-in-hand. However, many are currently exploring the inflammatory process that occurs as gum disease progresses.

Why? Certain similarities have been discovered between the inflammatory process in

gum disease and that of other diseases. Now many are wondering whether the inflammation responses are somehow connected, and they are looking into whether gum disease may actually have a more direct role than we previously thought in raising a person's risk of other diseases.

### Developing a Routine

The best oral health routine involves several key elements. These include:

- **Brushing twice daily.** For best results, use a soft bristle brush and fluoride containing toothpaste. Nighttime brushing is important, because the mouth acts like an "incubator" of sorts for bacteria overnight; conversely, morning brushing helps get rid of all the bacteria that grew overnight.
- **Flossing twice daily.** Ideally, this should be done in conjunction with brushing. Flossing is a hugely important part of home care – and unfortunately, one of the most-often neglected.
- **Seeing a dentist every 6 months.** Getting regular cleanings, exams, and X-rays can ensure that your mouth stays in good order health-wise.
- **Limit sugar intake.** Perhaps the most important sugar to limit is liquid sugars – like soda.
- **Cut out tobacco.** No explanation needed.

A huge part of oral health down the road is simply becoming an active participant in your health **now**. Start a good routine and stick to it. Set up regular appointments, and if you have issues, don't wait to call a dentist. Several online resources offer great information related to the teeth and mouth, including [mouthhealthy.com](http://mouthhealthy.com) from the American Dental Association. Educate yourself today! 

