

Your Mouth is the Gauge to your Health^{Dr.}

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Photo courtesy of Dr. Eric L. Fugier

Health is more than the absence of disease. Just because we are not sick, it doesn't mean we are healthy. Most of the chronic illnesses the human race is facing today are lifestyle diseases and take many years, even decades, to develop. We don't usually suddenly get plaque on our arteries and have a heart attack. It takes time for this plaque to build up and show its presence in the blood chemistry.

Similarly in dentistry, one does not suddenly lose their teeth from gum disease. It takes years for the bone to deteriorate, the gums to recede and to finally lose your teeth.

Is there a connection between your mouth and your body's health?

According to Dr. Theresa Dale, a naturopath and Dean of the California College of Natural Medicine, a variety of medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, HIV and adverse outcomes of pregnancy have associations with oral health. In addition, the nutritional status of an individual also impacts the wellness of his mouth. In fact, a two-way interaction between nutrition and oral health has been observed. Diseases of the oral cavity, as well as other systemic diseases threatening oral wellness, can affect an individual's ability to eat and hence affect his/her nutritional status. The position statement of the American Dietetic

Association is "nutrition is an integral component of oral health."

How can gum inflammation affect your body's health?

The American Academy of Periodontology states that significant progress is being made in the study and treatment of periodontal diseases, including the link between them and overall health. Studies show that periodontal disease may represent a far more serious threat to the health of many Americans. It has long been known that periodontal disease, a chronic inflammatory condition, may cause tooth loss. Now research has identified that periodontal inflammation may be linked to heart disease, preterm births, infant low birth weight, respiratory disease and diabetes. People with inflammatory-related risk factors will want to monitor their periodontal health throughout their lives.

Oral Fitness Program

The goal of this article is to emphasize the importance of preventive dentistry.

It's very effective in establishing and maintaining your oral health, and can be achieved by following the guidelines of a strict oral fitness program.

1. A visit to your dentist once a year for X-rays and a clinical exam.
2. A visit to your dental hygienist every two to six months, depending on several factors - age, plaque and tartar; state of bone and gum health.
3. A dental hygienist should probe your gums at least once a year to determine if there is any bone loss and perform an oral cancer examination during every visit.
4. Daily care includes brushing and flossing to remove plaque, brushing your tongue, and disinfecting your tooth brush.
5. Some mouthwash can help prevent plaque formation.

This fitness program of the mouth works best when complemented by a similar attitude towards the body and a proper nutrition. If you want to be healthy in your 50's, start the program in your 20's, and if you want to be healthy in your 80's, get started in your teens.