



ORAL HYGIENE: WHY IS IT THE FIRST STEP TO AN OVERALL HEALTH?:

FOR DR. ROZE BIOHEALTH CLINICS | 23.05 · 2022

BIODENTAL

Since you cannot see the inside of your mouth by yourself, you may be left unbrushed area even if you are taking good care of your teeth.

Tartar and plaque can easily harbor bacteria (such as carious bacteria and

gum disease), which can increase the risk of tooth decay and gum disease if left untreated. Regular dental cleanings can help maintain oral health and keep your teeth aesthetically pleasing.

But beyond these purely dental aspects, there is an important connection between the health of your mouth and health of your body. **This is called the oral-systemic connection.** This simply means that oral health impacts your overall health, and systemic health (the presence of various diseases and disorders in your body) can affect your oral health. **With your mouth as the "gateway to your body,"** things like proper brushing techniques, diet, and regular visits to the dentist can have a direct influence on your physical, psychological, and social health

1/- What is the oral systemic health connection?

One of the most unusual and unfortunate occurrences in the history of healthcare was the separation of the medical and dental industries. It is unusual because (obviously) the mouth is part of the body. It is not some separate, isolated entity. It is unfortunate because this division has led some to mistakenly assume that oral health problems do not affect the rest of the body. The truth is, you cannot be totally healthy without a healthy mouth!

The mouth is the gateway to the body, and there is an important two-way connection. This is called the oral-systemic health connection. This simply means that oral health impacts your overall health, and systemic health (the presence of various diseases and disorders) can affect your oral health. The two are intricately linked. Your mouth is full of important defense mechanisms, like saliva. When unhealthy, your mouth can be full of dangerous bacteria, like those that cause cavities, gum disease, and dental abscesses.

2/- What is "Poor Oral Health"

Poor oral health involves the presence of active dental disease and/or multiple risk factors for dental problems. Most dental diseases are preventable, so there is an element of patient responsibility in poor oral health.

Cavities and gum disease are both bacterial infections that progressively get worse over time without help from a dentist.

Cavities, or tooth decay, are bacterial infections of the hard tissues of the teeth (the enamel and underlying dentin). Caries, the scientific term for tooth decay, is thought to be the most common infectious disease in the world. The bacteria responsible for cavities lives within dental plaque, the sticky white buildup that accumulates on teeth between cleanings. This plaque helps the bacteria maintain contact with your tooth's enamel, which weakens and softens in response to the bacteria's release of acid. Acid is the by-product of the bacteria's intake of sugar from our diet. High pH levels in the mouth can boost the bacteria's ability to break through enamel which leads to greater tooth decay.

Gum disease is also the result of dangerous bacteria in dental plaque. Officially called periodontitis, or periodontal disease, this happens when the bacteria produce toxins, which seep into the gum tissues. The human body's response to these toxins is inflammation. Gum disease, therefore, is not only an infectious disease; it is also an inflammatory disease. Without treatment, the chronic inflammation of gum disease will destroy the supporting tissues around the teeth.

3/- What are the consequences of “Poor Oral Health”?

As we emphasized in our introduction, the mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body. The diseases present in poor oral health have local consequences in the mouth itself, but also cause problems in other areas of the body.

- Most people are aware of the fact that dental problems can cause **pain**. Everyone is familiar with the concept of a toothache. What many do not realize is that you can have severe dental disease without noticeable symptoms. Not every cavity causes a toothache, and gum disease is often silent until a tooth loses so much support that it becomes loose or even falls out!

- When poor oral health leads to the loss of teeth, the consequences are many and widely varied. Losing a tooth not only removes a portion of your chewing force; it also creates additional **stress on the remaining teeth**, which attempt to carry more “weight” than they were made to bear. Neighboring teeth can crack or shift positions or suffer from receding gums, all because you lose a single tooth.
- And of course, there is the **cosmetic component of losing teeth**. Even with the loss of back teeth only, there is a negative impact on the smile and the appearance of the face.
- Because chewing is the important first step in digestion, patients who lose multiple teeth can suffer from **digestive problems** as the result of large under-chewed food particles reaching the stomach.

Poor Oral Health has also great “systemic” consequences on our overall health:

- Infectious and inflammatory diseases in the mouth do not stay in the mouth. They can spread and affect other areas of the body. In the case of dangerous dental infections, in rare instances, they spread to the airway, bloodstream or brain. **This means a tooth infection can literally kill you!**
- Severe periodontal disease is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects your immune system, your body's ability to heal, and your risk for most types of cancer. **Chronic inflammation** is always bad, no matter what part of the body it affects.
- Countless scientific research studies show a significant link between oral health and specific systemic diseases, like **heart attack, stroke, diabetes, and Alzheimer's**. Scientists have found bacteria usually present in gum disease as far away in the body as the **heart, spinal column and brain**. Make no mistake: what happens in the mouth does *not* stay in the mouth
- Poor oral health in pregnant women has an impact on their babies. Women who have gum disease while pregnant have a higher risk for **low birth weight babies** than those with good oral health

4/- What are the benefits of good oral health?

We know that good oral health takes time and effort, but we want to assure you that it is worth the investment! Not only does having good oral health help you prevent the consequences we discussed in the previous sections; it also provides you with many great benefits.

- **Economic:** The cost of dental cleaning is relatively low, but the economic payoff can be huge! Someone who commits to great oral healthcare at home and with a professional twice a year will save a significant amount of money in dental care over his or her lifetime. It is much less expensive to prevent dental problems through consistent maintenance than to repair them after they occur.
- **Social:** Did you know that poor oral health is the #1 cause of bad breath? We don't need to explain how bad breath affects your social life. In this same thought, a healthy smile greatly improves our confidence, appearance, and self-esteem.
- **Psychological:** The psychological impact of poor oral health is complicated. Some people will suffer from low self-esteem, lacking the confidence needed to proudly display their smile due to the appearance of their teeth. Because people with dental problems tend to hide their smiles or laughter, they are often perceived by others as unfriendly or unkind.
- **Physical:** A healthy mouth promotes a healthy body! Good oral health allows you to eat a balanced diet without restricting certain foods due to temperature or a tough texture. Strong teeth successfully complete the first stage of digestion by chewing your food properly.

Because your mouth is healthy, your immune system is not busy fighting inflammation and infection there. This means you can fight off other health problems like colds, sinus infections, the flu, and of course, COVID-19!

5/- How can I maintain a good oral health ?

Now that you know why you should maintain good oral health, this section explains how to do just that.

There are several important factors in this process, and unfortunately, just like with many health problems, these factors vary for different people. Everyone seems to know someone who “doesn’t take care of their teeth,” yet never suffers from major dental complications. We know how frustrating that is. It’s simply not fair.

The best analogy is with weight loss. Some people eat right and exercise, but still struggle to keep excess weight off. The same is true for dental disease. For some people, maintaining proper health takes more diligence and effort. If you are one of the “unlucky” ones who has a high risk for dental diseases, you will need to work closely with your dentist for prevention.

The following principles are wonderful guidelines for everyone to follow, regardless of your level of risk.

- **Good Home Care**

Dental plaque is the underlying culprit of most dental problems. The bad news is that it collects on your teeth every single day. The good news is that it is simple to remove. Your job in maintaining good home care is good plaque removal. The two most important factors in home care are consistency and technique.

1. **Consistent Plaque Removal** – Plaque is a never-ending problem in the mouth. It begins accumulating the second you put your toothbrush down on the counter. When plaque remains on the teeth, it begins to harden into a different substance known as tartar or calculus. This is important to understand because you can remove plaque. You cannot remove tartar. Tartar will not come off with a toothbrush and floss. In order to intercept this process, plaque must be removed every single day.
2. **Correct Plaque Removal Technique** – Did you know that you can brush and floss every day and still leave plaque on the teeth? That’s because technique matters when it comes to plaque removal. Your toothbrush bristles must touch every surface of the teeth, including the area where each tooth meets the gums. Your floss must wrap around each tooth, moving in a vertical motion to physically clean plaque from the teeth. Snapping the floss quickly up and down will not remove plaque.

- **A Balanced Diet**

In our earlier description of the cavity process, we mentioned the effect of acid on the teeth. The pH of the entire mouth plays a role in your risk for developing cavities. Put simply, an acidic mouth makes it easier for bacteria to break through your enamel. We make our mouths acidic by sipping acidic beverages throughout the day, including sodas, coffee, tea, and sports drinks.

Aside from maintaining a healthy pH in your mouth, it's important to limit a diet in sweets, alcohol, and all tobacco products. For your oral and overall health, a balanced diet is key. Foods like cheese, almonds, and spinach are high in calcium, promoting strong bones and enamel. Protein and fibre-rich foods provide necessary nutrients for healthy teeth. And of course, drink plenty of water! Drinking plain water and chewing sugar-free gum, stimulates saliva production, helping your mouth to naturally fight disease and plaque buildup.

- **Consistent Dental Visits for professional dental cleaning**

Most dental complications do not cause noticeable symptoms until they require serious and expensive treatment. The only way to ensure you do not develop a progressing dental problem is to maintain consistent visits with your dentist. You should have **professional teeth cleanings** on a regular basis, at least twice a year, so that your dental hygienist can remove areas of plaque and/or tartar buildup that you've missed and give you instructions on improving your plaque removal at home.

At Dr Roze BioHealth Clinics, our specialist will catch any warning signs or risk factors for potential dental problems and help you take steps to prevent them.

- **Practice Full-Body Wellness**

We know poor oral health can have negative effects on your systemic health, but the reverse remains true as well. To maintain a healthy, beautiful smile, it's important that your whole body is in good shape. Patients who suffer from conditions like anorexia, or gastroesophageal reflux disease, risk damaging or even losing their teeth from acid erosion.

Dry mouth is a common side-effect for others who take prescription medications or have been diagnosed with diabetes. If you suffer from dry mouth, it's important to consult your dentist for a mouth rinse, as continued reduction in saliva can increase your risk for periodontal disease.

Depression, anxiety, and even stress can cause cracks in your teeth or lead to subconscious night time grinding. You can protect your teeth with appliances like a mouthguard, but it's best for your health to manage and resolve the root cause as well. It's always important to speak with your dentist and general doctor about all possible health concerns.

Oral Health's Connection to Total Health: Your Next Steps

The link between your oral health and overall health is clear. By prioritizing your oral health, you can take great strides toward improving your total health. Begin the recommended regimen of home care today, and schedule a visit with your dentist if you have not seen one in more than six months. Catching problems as soon as possible lowers your risk for serious health consequences!



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